

# CINEFANTASTIQUE

SPECIAL ISSUE

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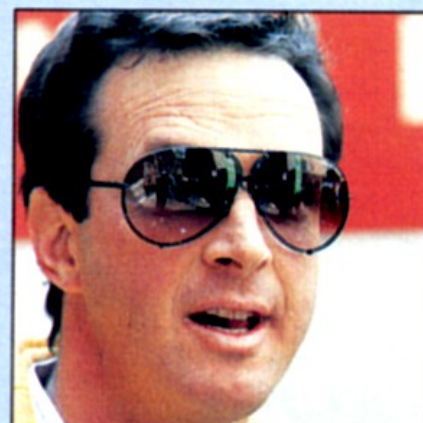
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**2** CHRIS CARTER



**3** JAMES CAMERON



**4** MICHAEL CRICHTON



**5** GEORGE LUCAS



**6** ROBERT ZEMECKIS



**7** ROLAND EMMERICH

# THE 50 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN SCIENCE FICTION



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**9** SAM RAIMI



**10** EDWARD R. PRESSMAN



**11** CHRIS COLUMBUS



**12** RICK BERMAN

DARIO ARGENTO'S  
"STENDHAL SYNDROME"

MYSTERY SCIENCE  
THEATRE--THE MOVIE

Volume 27 Number 8





# CINEFANTASTIQUE



## JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH

# THE REVIEW OF HORROR FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION FILMS GOES MONTHLY

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"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

APRIL 1996

### CINEMAGINATION

It's a little sad, overall, to contemplate the fate of the baby-boomer genre filmmakers who began to reach the silver screen in the '70s. For the first time, a generation that had grown up with the movies as a major part of their lives were making movies of their own; many of them film school graduates, they brought an awareness of film not as a mere job or craft but as a popular art that could last for future generations. In rapid succession, this swarm of young directors and writers made their mark, with works that often paid homage to past masters while striving to advance the medium in directions more specifically cinematic, as opposed to literary or dramatic. Think of films like *THE EXORCIST*, *JAWS*, *CARRIE*, *SUSPIRIA*, *STAR WARS*, *ALIEN*, *THE BROOD*, and *DAWN OF THE DEAD*, and it looks as if we may have been living in a Golden Era.

Some of that explosion of talent reverberated into the '80s, but since then many careers that should have stretched to the millennium have, for reasons of either diminished interest or diminished boxoffice, dwindled away to almost nothing. Consequently, when you peruse our assessment of science-fiction's Top 50 People, you may note that some of your old favorites are missing. This is no slight on their talent, which often remains prodigious, but rather an acknowledgment of the lack of recent success that has made it harder for these filmmakers to greenlight the kind of projects on which their reputations are based.

Such an individual is Dario Argento, whose seminal work predated scores of hack imitators. Unfortunately, his recent attempts to break into the American market met with what could charitably be called, at most, meager success. Now that he's back in Italy, we can only hope he regains his former glory. But even if he and his American brethren fail to recreate their past boxoffice success, we will continue to appreciate and praise the high-quality work that they create.

Steve Biodrowski



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## EAGERLY AWAITED

### MULTIPLICITY (Columbia)

Too many commitments and not enough time plague Doug Kinney (Michael Keaton), who opts for a unique solution in this fantasy-comedy: with work, family, and personal needs all demanding attention, Doug has himself cloned. Andie MacDowell plays his wife, who ends up with more husbands than she expected. Chris Miller, Mary Hale, Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel, and director Harold Ramis all had a hand in the screenplay. If Ramis and MacDowell can recapture the chemistry of their previous collaboration, *GROUNDHOG DAY*, we could have another charming winner.

Summer



### ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN 2 (MGM)

March 29

MGM produced this sequel to Don Bluth's 1989 animated musical, with few of the original participants. Charlie Sheen, Sheena Easton, Ernest Borgnine and Dom DeLuise provide the voices. Larry Leker and Paul Sabella directed, from a script by Arne Olsen, Kelly Ward, and Mark Young, with songs by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil.

### CEMETERY MAN (October)

March 1

Pushed back from an announced February release, this comic-gore shocker from Michele Soavi finally reaches a theatre near you. SEE CFQ 25:5



### DIABOLIQUE (Warners)

March 29

Isabelle Adjani and Sharon Stone (pictured above, at left and right, respectively) star in this remake of George Clouzot's classic thriller. Director Jeremiah Chechik makes a considerable jump from his debut effort, *NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION*.

### JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH (Walt Disney)

April 12

Henry Selick's follow-up to *A NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*, which he directed for Tim Burton, promises to be another stupendous stop-motion adventure, based on Roald Dahl's story of a miserable orphan who crawls inside an enormous peach and finds it filled with talking insects who take him to New York. SEE PAGE 7

### HELLRAISER: BLOODLINE (Dimension)

March 8

The troubled production finally escapes from post-production hell. Doug Bradley is back as Pinhead; director Kevin Yagher was replaced in post-production by HALLOWEEN 6's Joe Chappelle; and Peter Atkins' ambitious script, set in past, present and future, was restructured in the editing room. SEE CFQ 27:2

### LOCH NESS (Gramercy) September

Planned distribution in April would have put this film in competition for the same audience demographic with *OLIVER AND COMPANY*, *THEODORE REX*, and *ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN 2*, so the release was delayed at the last minute, pushing the film back into the less competitive Fall season.

### MARY REILLY (TriStar)

Now playing

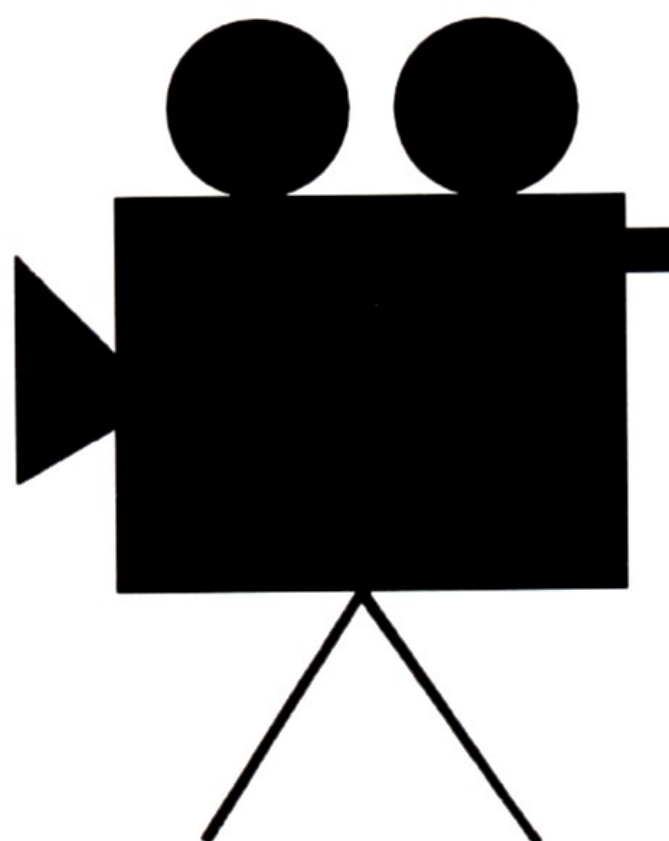
After months of delay, Valerie Martin's fine novel reaches the silver screen, courtesy of director Stephen Frears and screenwriter Christopher Hampton. Pushed back yet again from February 2 to February 23. Julia Roberts stars as the eponymous maid who idolizes her employer, Dr. Henry Jekyll (John Malkovich) until she uncovers the secret of his research. SEE CFQ 26:3



# RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson  
(unless otherwise noted)



### MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000: THE MOVIE (Gramercy)

May

After months of delay, it seemed the *Satellite of Love* would be orbiting into theaters in April—until Gramercy sized up the competition and realized that May would be a less crowded month. SEE PAGE 8

### OLIVER AND COMPANY (Walt Disney)

March 29

Disney re-releases their late-'80s subclass, which predates the animation revival begun with *THE LITTLE MERMAID* in 1989. The attempt to translate Dickens' *Oliver Twist* into an animated musical is less successful than *THE LION KING*'s riff on *Hamlet*, but at least Bette Midler belts out one good song.

### THEODORE REX (New Line) March 29

Speaking of turning classical stage tragedy into a musical with cute animals, New Line goes Disney one better in this animated update of Sophocles, which replaces Oedipus with a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Wallace Shawn recreates his role from *TOY STORY*, and Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor sings the theme song, "How Terrible Is Wisdom When It Brings No Prophet to the Wise." OOPS! Sorry, went a little crazy there for a moment. Actually, this is a live-action buddy-cop film starring a somewhat reluctant Whoopie Goldberg and an animatronic (not animated) talking T-Rex named Theodore. SEE CFQ 27:4-5

### THINNER (Paramount)

Spring

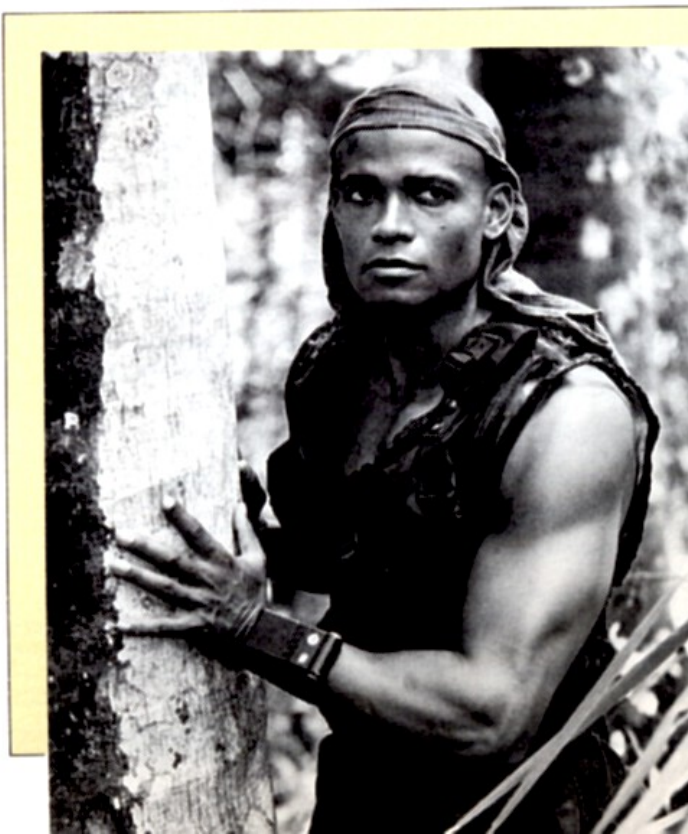
At press time, the studio had yet to set a release date for this adaptation of Stephen King's Bachman book. Tom Holland directed, from a script by Michael McDowell. SEE PAGE 12

## WAIT AND SEE

### SOLO (Triumph)

In the wake of their dismal *SCREAMERS*, Triumph Films, Sony Picture's genre division, releases another low-budget hybrid of science-fiction and action-adventure. This time, Mario Van Peebles plays the titular character; a robotic warrior wired with extraordinary fighting skills, he is the government's most dangerous, top-secret assassin, capable of carrying out covert missions anywhere in the world and even repairing himself on sight. Of course, being a sophisticated simulation of a man, he also has the ability to think and learn, which leads to complications when he begins to learn what it means to be human. William Sadler and Barry Corbin co-star. Norberto Barba directed; David Corley wrote the screenplay, based on the novel *Weapon* by Robert Mason.

April 19





# HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

## JACK'S BACK!

*Friedkin to film the Ripper's Diary.*

by Alan Jones

More than a century after the actual shocking events, the fascination with Jack the Ripper is still proving to be a cinematic lure for filmmakers. Since Alfred Hitchcock and G. W. Pabst enlisted Saucy Jack for their silent classics *THE LODGER* (1926) and *PANDORA'S BOX* (1928), the legendary serial killer, who cut a swathe through the prostitutes of London's East End in 1888, has starred in numerous puzzle-solving horrors including *THE MAN IN THE ATTIC* (1953), *JACK THE RIPPER* (1958), *A STUDY IN TERROR* (1965), *HANDS OF THE RIPPER* (1972), *MURDER BY DECREE* (1978), and *TIME AFTER TIME* (1980).

Add another three titles to the list as Jack heads back to the genre mainstream over the next year. Hollywood Pictures have paid \$2 million for the rights to Terry Hayes *FROM HELL* script derived from Alan Moore's graphic novel *Greetings From Hell*. The title takes its name from the return address printed on the fourth letter Jack wrote to the baffled Whitechapel police as he continually evaded capture. Britain's Hammer Films have also bought the screen rights to *The Lodger*, a book claiming Spring-heeled Jack—as contemporary newspapers dubbed him—was an American physician who loathed women and *Ladies of the Night*. Not to be confused with the Hitchcock version, *THE LODGER* maintains the doctor left Britain just as the police were getting close to identifying him—the reason why the mutilation killings abruptly ceased.

But the most interesting Ripper project is William Friedkin's *THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER* which gives a new slant to the chilling case history in the way *MARY REILLY* did for *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In late 1994, New Line Cinema bought the rights to Shirley Harrison's best-seller *The Diary of Jack the Ripper* for \$500,000. Harrison's book identified the Ripper as James Maybrick, a 49-year-old cotton merchant from Liverpool, England, who was a strychnine and arsenic ad-



Laird Cregar and George Sanders in *THE LODGER*, one of many fictionalized stories of Jack the Ripper. Now Friedkin is filming an allegedly true account.

dict with a history of domestic violence. Her proof was Maybrick's diary, discovered by Liverpool scrap-metal dealer Mike Bennett in 1990, in which he confessed to the Ripper murders. Controversy and fraud allegations have surrounded her well-documented findings ever since despite the impressive amount of scientific evidence produced to back up her theory. While crime expert Colin Wilson has said, "Maybrick is far and away the most likely Ripper candidate so far," other professionals have disagreed and consider the whole affair a huge con trick.

However, the possibility of Maybrick being the Ripper is of sec-

ondary importance to *THE EXORCIST* director's take on the subject matter currently being scripted by Chris DeVore. In a separate series of events just as sensational as the Ripper murders, Maybrick's American wife Florence Elizabeth was found guilty of his murder in 1890. Florie, as she was affectionately known, supposedly poisoned her husband because of his adultery and her trial was the O.J. Simpson equivalent of its day. Friedkin said, "I'm calling the film *MRS. MAYBRICK* because she's the central character. She's the only American ever to be tried in a British court and, while found guilty and sen-

continued on page 61

## THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES

by Dennis Fischer

Best-selling author Caleb Carr, whose novel *The Alienist* (about a psychologist who investigates the murders of a serial killer in pre-turn-of-the-century New York) is being adapted for the screen by Philip Kaufman (*INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* [1978]), will serve as writer and executive producer of *THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES*, the pilot for a new science-fiction series which will air on CBS sometime in March.

The co-executive producers are Mike Finnell, Robert Eisele, and Joe Dante, who is also directing the pilot, which is produced by Paramount. The series stars former *NORTHERN EXPOSURED* d.j. John Corbett as Justin Thorpe, a renegade warrior living in the dark age of the 24th Century.

"The basic genesis," explained Carr, "is that, having been a lifelong *STAR TREK* fan, I always had wondered, given the twists of my personality, what would happen when the world of the Federation collapsed? What would the galaxy be like when that all finally came to an end? The original idea was to portray that kind of a world. As we got into the '90s, and our world became increasingly fractious and collapsed, it seemed to be a much more propitious time for that kind of metaphor than it had ever been before. I sat down and started working out the details, and pitched it to Paramount, because that's the studio that does successful science-fiction shows, and fortunately they liked it."

In the pilot, after the collapse of the Galactic Republic, ancient rivalries have erupted into warfare, and the galaxy is in chaos. Justin's brilliant sister Nova (J. Madison Wright) is kidnapped, and Justin is forced to assemble a team to rescue her. Rod Taylor (*THE TIME MACHINE*) stars as Lars Sorenson, a former general of the Republic, who needs Justin's help to repair his ship the *Osiris*, which is capably piloted by Sorenson's granddaughter Maggie (Kate Maberly).

The intention is to do a non-militaristic, somewhat different kind of space adventure show, which like *THE ALIENIST* would fit comfortably into a genre while offering commentary on contemporary issues. □

## Short Notes

*MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000*, after turning in a handful of 7th season episodes because of work on the feature, has been canceled. However, producer **Jim Mallon** prefers the word "hiatus," insisting that the show will be back—if not on Comedy Central, then elsewhere. ♪ During post-production on *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, **Roland Emmerich** and **Dean Devlin** were offered the chance to take over TriStar's *GODZILLA* project. The filmmaking duo's reputation for delivering lavish science fiction on a reasonable budget was a major factor, considering that previous director Jan DeBont wanted over \$100-million. ♪ **Anthony Waller**, who scored a critical hit with the low-budget thriller *MUTE WITNESS*, has been signed to direct *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS*. ♪ **Val Kilmer** turned down the offer to play Simon Templar in Paramount's big screen *THE SAINT*. Now **George Clooney** (*FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*) is the most likely candidate. □



# SPACE TRUCKERS

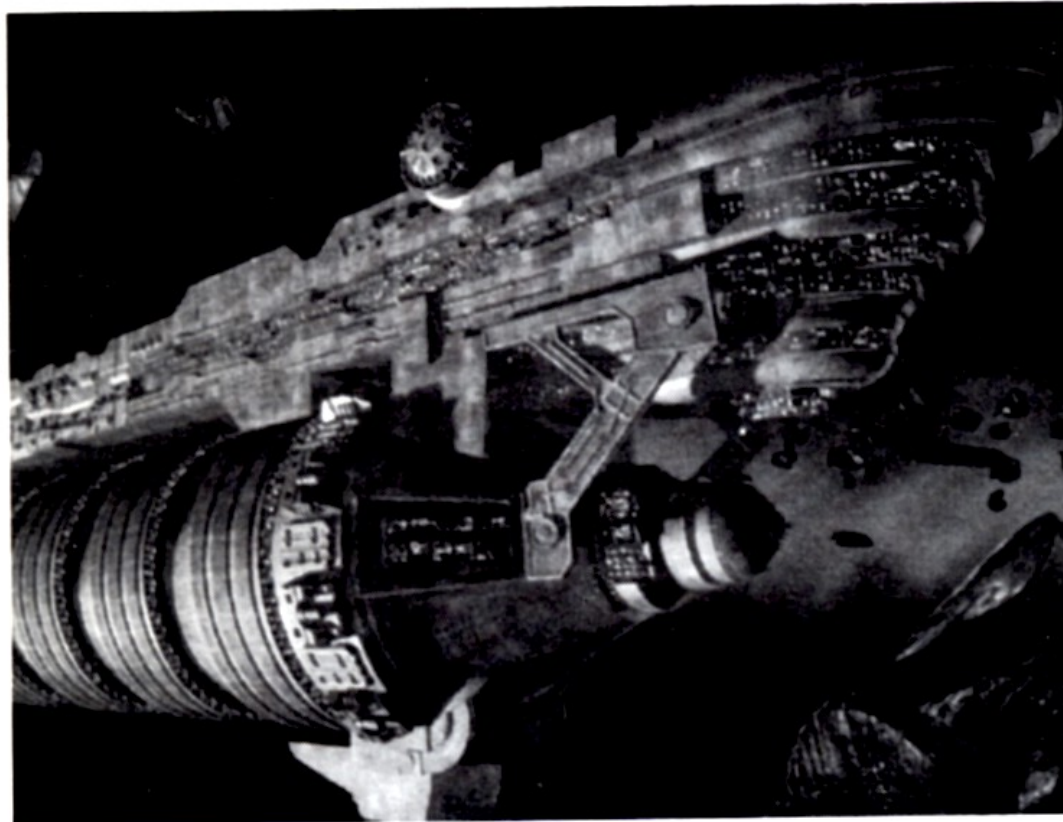
*Stuart Gordon gets a new machine and goes space truckin' to the stars!*

by Dennis Fischer

One of the most promising science-fiction films in a long time is Stuart Gordon's *SPACE TRUCKERS* (see *CFQ* 26:4), which, having completed principal photography in Ireland last year, is currently in post-production for a possible end-of-the-year release. Set in 2196, the film stars Dennis Hopper in a sympathetic role for a change, as John Canyon, a blue-collar deep-space trucker who is coerced into making a covert run to Earth. Along for the ride are novice trucker Mike Pucci (Stephen Dorff, from *THE GATE*), waitress Cindy (Debi Mazar, Spice in *BATMAN FOREVER*), and—unbeknownst to them—several deadly biomechanical warriors, designed by famed Japanese artist Hajime Soroyama.

The film also stars Charles Dance as a space pirate, Vernon Wells (*ROAD WARRIOR*) as his henchman, George Wendt as a corporate lackey, and Barbara Crampton as a secondary love interest. The special effects are being supervised by Paul Gentry (*TOTAL RECALL*) and Brian Johnson (*ALIEN*), with special makeup effects by Greg Cannom, Screaming Mad George, and Optic Nerve.

During pre-production, the budget ballooned from \$17.5-million to \$23-million. "It was because, as we got further into it, we realized that the effects and various departments needed a little more money," explained Gordon. "Our producers had to go out and find extra money to make the movie, and they really



London's Electric Image company provided the optical work for Stuart Gordon's *SPACE TRUCKERS*, the first elaborate effects film produced in Ireland.

did incredible, herculean efforts. I think part of what made it possible was the success of *FORTRESS*. We went back to a lot of the same companies that had financed that movie, although in this case we were asking for more than double what they had given us, and they, for the most part, responded."

Compared to *WATERWORLD*, \$23 million may not seem like much; in fact, it's under-average for the usual studio feature. However, it is the largest budget Gordon has ever had, and *SPACE TRUCKERS* is one of the costliest independents ever made in Ireland. The main reason for shooting there was Section 35, which was created as an

incentive for people to invest in films in exchange for tax breaks and benefits. "We got a portion of our budget from the Irish government through Section 35," said Gordon, "which did not even have to be returned. It was the kind of offer we could hardly turn down."

*SPACE TRUCKERS* will be the first elaborate effects film to result from the incentives. "The government wanted to show that they could make a special effects movie there," said Gordon. "Essentially, it encouraged us to do all the effects there. We set up a facility, took a warehouse, and turned it into a studio. We brought in motion-control systems and computers and model makers and all of these things."

*SPACE TRUCKERS* is truly an international effort, with not only British and American companies but also Australian crewmembers who worked on *FORTRESS*. Also, Koichi Sakimoto (*A CHINESE GHOST STORY*) was hired as stunt coordinator to aid in the creation of weightlessness effects.

Though *SPACE TRUCKERS* is not without a sense of humor, Gordon insists that it will maintain a core of credibility regarding what might truly be possible in space. Several distributors have expressed an interest in the film, which should go space truckin' into theaters by Christmas. □

## Obituaries

by Jay Stevenson

### Jack Finney

The author of *The Body Snatchers* died of pneumonia on November 14 at the age of 84. His novel was filmed three times, most notably in the 1956 classic *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* and the 1978. Finney also wrote *Time and Again*, which Robert Redford's company is developing for the screen; a sequel, *From Time to Time* was published last year.

### John van Eyssen

The 73-year-old former actor died of cancer in a London hospital on November 13. Although a career switch put him behind the camera for the last thirty years of his life, he deserves recognition for being the best on-screen incarnation of Jonathan Harker, in Hammer's 1958 *HORROR OF DRACULA*. His other films include Joseph Losey's *BLIND DATE* and Hammer's *FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE* and *QUARTERMASS II* (U.S. title: *ENEMY FROM SPACE*).

### Patrick Knowles

The 84-year-old actor died of a cerebral hemorrhage on December 23. Although he played a variety of romantic leads in the '30s and '40s, he is recognizable to genre fans because of many appearances in films like *THE WOLF MAN* (1941), *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN* (1943), and his last films, *ARNOLD* and *TERROR IN THE WAX MUSEUM* (both 1973). □

## THE RELIC

The novel *Relic* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child was a competent thriller that moved too slowly and had too many distracting characters and subplots. Fortunately, Amy Holden Jones' script for the film has fixed all that: eliminated the slow parts, changed the characters and rearranged the story to create a much stronger female lead and a tightly focused linear plot. Biologist Margo Green (**Penelope Ann Miller**), inventor of a computer program which can describe the characteristics of a species from a sample of its DNA, aids an FBI investigation of mutilated bodies at a museum featuring a display of cursed artifacts of the warrior god Mbwun. In an *X-FILES*-like mystery, she must help an agent (**Tom Sizemore**) to determine whether these killings are simply the work of a madman or, more incredibly, that of an ancient animal brought back by the expedition; there's even the possibility it might be the god Mbwun himself. Though the script calls for a half-reptile, half-mammal killing machine, a source who visited the set tells us makeup effects chief Stan Winston has developed a creature that is some kind of primordial protoplasm. Produced by Gale Ann Hurd and directed by Peter Hyams, *RELIC* looks like a fun summer monster movie with a top-flight production. **Nancy Garcia**

## Production Starts

### CRASH

David Cronenberg returns to the genre with this adaptation of J.G. Ballard's science-fiction novel. James Spader, Holly Hunter, Elias Koteas, and Rosanna Arquette star.

### ESCAPE FROM L.A.

This long-discussed project reteams director John Carpenter with Debra Hill and star Kurt Russell, who shares producer duties. The trio also collaborated on the script. Also in the cast: Cliff Robertson, Steve Buscemi, Pam Grier, Peter Fonda, Bruce Campbell, Valeria Golino, and Stacy Keach (who appeared in Carpenter's Showtime movie, *BODY BAGS*).

### LOST HIGHWAY

Director David Lynch returns to the big screen for the first time since *TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME*. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, and Robert Loggia star in this new effort, co-written by Lynch and Barry Gifford (author of *Wild at Heart*).





Above: Henry Selick directs child actor Paul Terry as James. Right: the Giant Peach of the title, seen in live-action from the outside. Inside is a fantastic stop-motion world of insects, which James enters.



# JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH

**T**he simple plot of **JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH** centers on nine-year-old James (Paul Terry), who yearns to escape the cruelty of his wicked Aunts, Spiker (Joanna Lumley) and Sponge (Miriam Margolyes). When a giant peach magically sprouts up outside his house, James enters it to find a collection of human-sized insects. The friendly bugs help James navigate the peach on a perilous voyage across the Atlantic, where their ultimate goal is to reach the Empire State Building. Henry Selick (**TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS**) directed the film, which is based on the children's story by Roald Dahl. Disney plans a May release.

To produce the film, the studio wanted someone with dual experience in live-action and animation, and found both those qualifications in Brian Rosen, an Irish immigrant to Australia, whose previous work included **FERNGULLY**, **THE LAST RAINFOREST**, as well as a very black live-action comedy, **MUSHROOMS**. Interestingly enough, the film was not developed through Disney's feature animation department but at their live-action division. "Initially, the question was whether to make the film entirely in stop-motion or do it the way it's being done now," explained Rosen. "We start with live-action, up until the point that James first goes inside the peach. Then everything that

## Producer Brian Rosen on Disney's live-action stop-motion combo.

*Preview by Lawrence French*

happens while he's inside the peach is stop-motion. Finally, when they get to New York, he comes out of the peach, and it's all live-action again. We'll have about 30 minutes of live-action and 45 minutes of stop-motion. The studio was somewhat reluctant, but Henry felt that having a combination of the two was the best way to tell the story. If it were all stop-motion, when James crosses over into the bug world, there would be no substantial difference."

Unlike Harryhausen's films, where human actors interact with stop-motion creatures, James is portrayed by a stop-motion puppet once he enters the wondrous interior of the peach. Thus, there is a very clear stylistic delineation in the film, just as the black-and-white reality differentiates itself from the Technicolor fantasy of **THE WIZARD OF OZ**. "The live-action is very stylized," noted Rosen. "That gives you a very cartoony sort of feel, although it's very muted colors, mostly greys and greens. Once James enters the animation world, it's full of rich and beautiful colors. The peach, the ocean, and the bugs themselves—all have

these vibrant colors to them, so it's a really magical world he's entered."

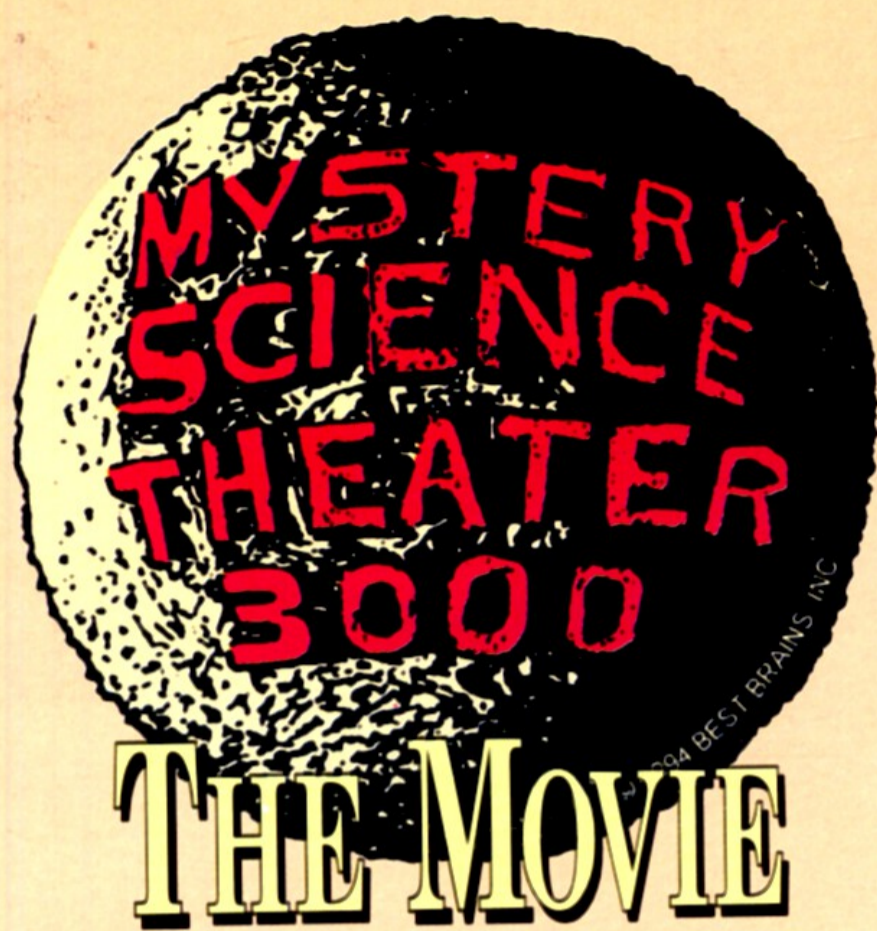
To adapt the book to the screen, Dennis Potter, the darkly brilliant author of **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** and **DREAMCHILD** was enlisted and, not too surprisingly, turned in a draft that was problematic for the studio.

"Potter had made it slightly black and bizarre," said Rosen. "On their trip across the ocean, he made the sharks that attack the giant peach into Nazis, and [Disney Chairman] Michael Eisner said, 'Why are there Nazis in this film?' The studio had great difficulties with it, and then Dennis died, so they said, 'Let's revamp the script.' They brought in two writers, Karey Kirkpatrick and Bruce Joel Rubin, and had them do competitive versions of the script. When the two scripts came back, they decided to go with the Kirkpatrick version."

Although Potter's more cerebral approach was scrapped, the vocal casting would indicate a desire to extend the film's appeal beyond a children's audience. Susan Sarandon plays the spider, as a sultry and somewhat aloof eastern European. Simon Callow (**FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL**) plays the Grasshopper, a very stiff and proper English gentleman, with a monocle and tweed jacket. David Thewlis (**NAKED**) is the Earthworm, who is the eternal pessimist of the group, and being

continued on page 61



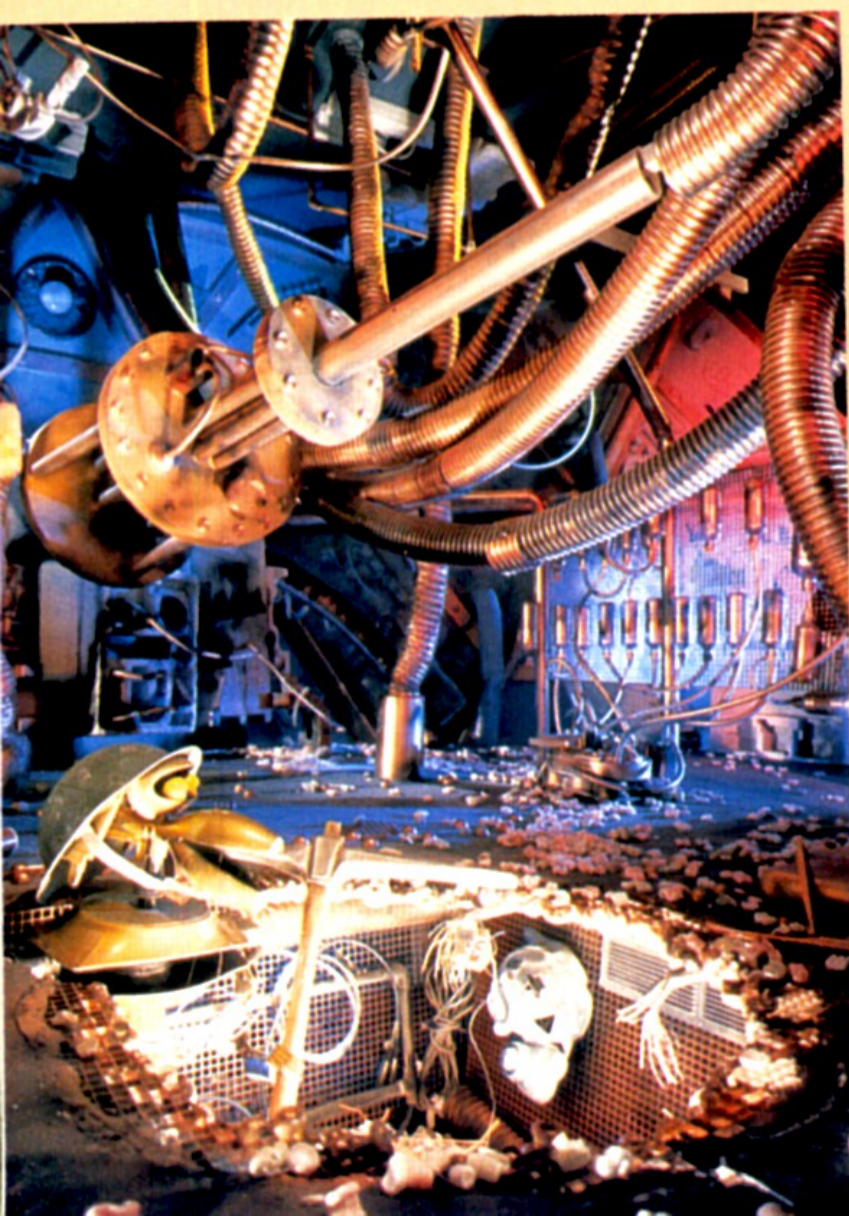


MYSTERY  
SCIENCE  
THEATER  
3000  
THE MOVIE

## The cult TV show hits the big screen.

By Dan Persons

Pity poor Exeter, lofty, lonely emissary from the planet Metaluna. Not only is he cursed with a high-rise forehead that makes doorway clearances a joke, and placed in command of a spaceship that evinces a dire need for a service run, now he also has to cope with having his filmic showcase deconstructed by a smart-mouthed temp-worker and his pair of robot buddies. Yes, in a move destined to baffle SF fans everywhere, MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000, Comedy Central's much-beloved TV series,



is going theatrical in a big way, taking on no less a cinematic milestone than Universal's 1955 classic, THIS ISLAND EARTH.

MST-3K is the ultimate in self-reflexive television: a weekly invitation for viewers to sit down and watch as viewers sit down and watch. But whether this rarefied concept would work on the big screen was something that, at first, only the staffers knew for sure. MST-3K producer Jim Mallon was "impressed with how the television show performed in front of a large audience," according Trace Beaulieu, who co-wrote MYSTERY SCIENCE 3000: THE MOVIE and built the model of the film's orbiting set-piece, the Satellite of Love, in addition fulfilling to his more prominent roles as mad scientist Dr. Clayton Forrester (the WAR OF THE WORLDS reference is deliberate), and as voice and operator of the robot puppet Crow. "We had an opportunity to do a live show in Minneapolis a couple of years ago, and we had a couple of sold-out shows in a 900- to 1000-seat theater, kind of an art-house film theater. It was great. Of course, it was mostly fans, but that was the birthing process of the film."

Added Mallon, who not only produced and directed the film but also joined in writing the script and operating the perpetually diffuse maintenance 'droid, Gypsy, "We started with Paramount

The film will show us a few areas of the Satellite of Love that have never been seen on TV. Left: a maintenance droid tidies up behind the scenes. Right: Tom Servo and Crow at work on a computer.



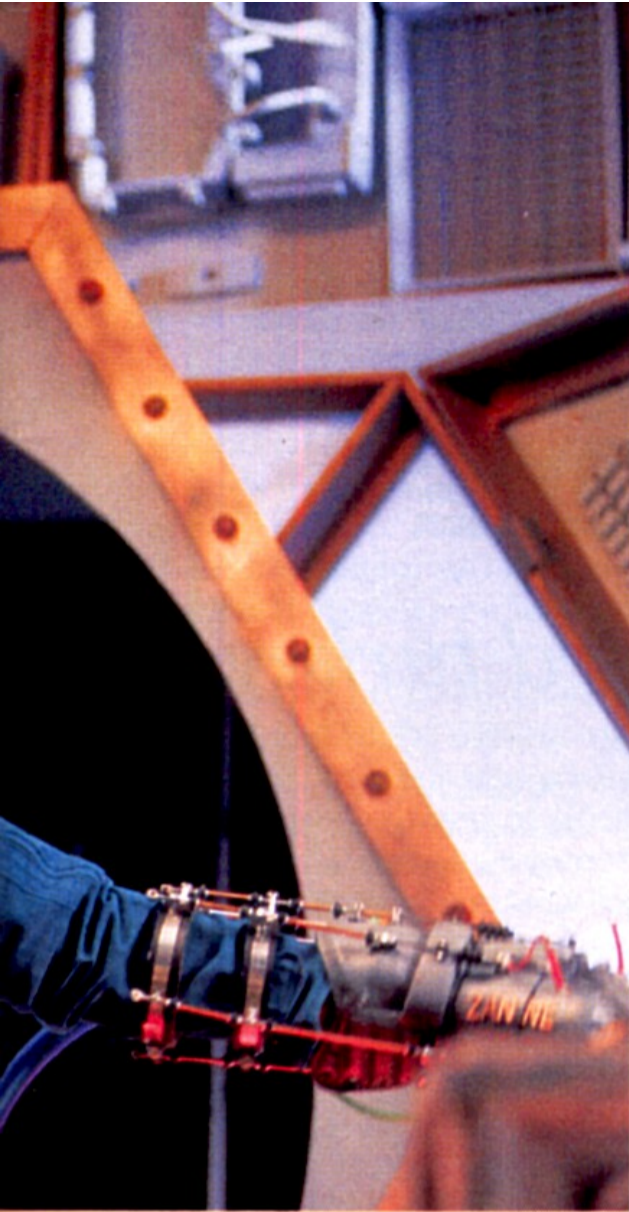
Ship Captain Mike Nelson on the enlarged sets of the Satellite of Love.

about three or four years ago; that didn't work out, although they were interested. Then we went over to Universal, and they began a two year process that ended up with the film." That two-year delay was due to the the suits at Universal, who expressed doubts over the film's prospects until a live performance of THIS ISLAND EARTH at an MST-3K convention convinced them [see *Imagi-Movies* 2:1 & 2:4]. The studio signed-on, shuttling production and distribution over to their partially owned and more specialized releasing arm, Gramercy.

Though the sixth season departure of writer-performer Frank Conniff meant that Dr. Forrester would be lacking his longtime sidekick, the popular and ever-adolescent TV's Frank, the producers of MST-3K:TM have otherwise kept the formula intact. Mike Nelson, who replaced series-creator and original star Joel Hodgson as test sub-







## THE SCRIPT

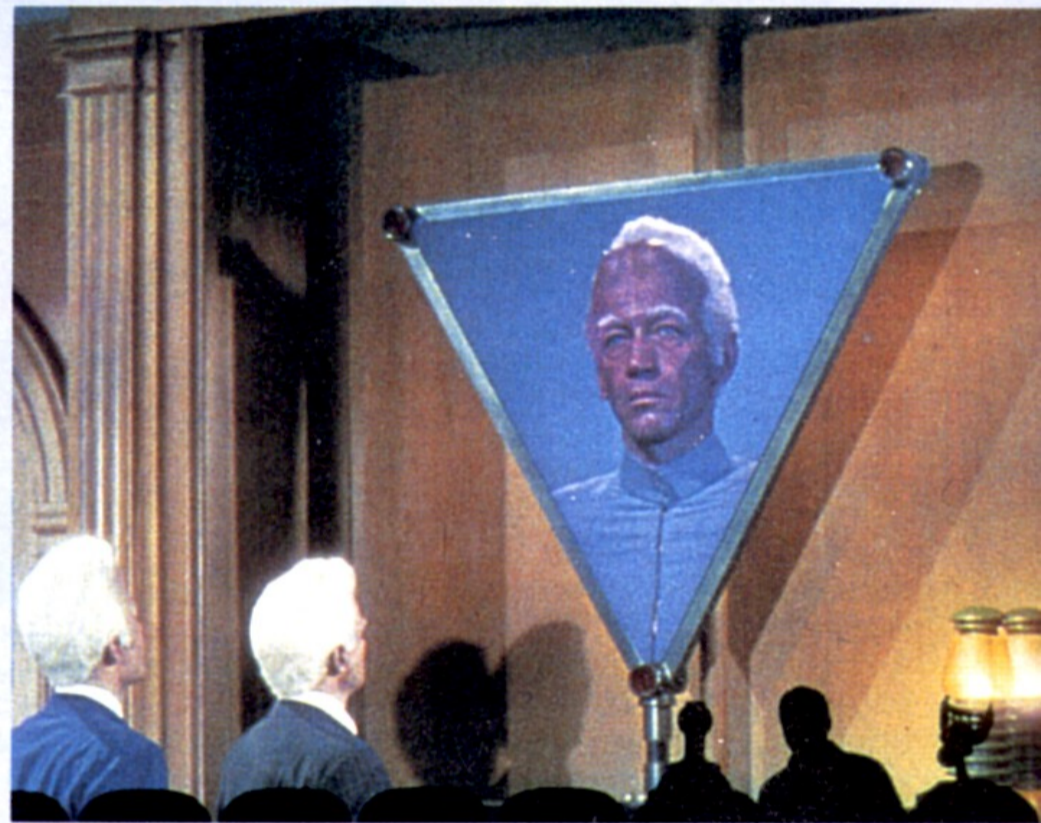
### *Taking aim at THIS ISLAND EARTH.*

Imagine watching a film you *like* fifty times. Now consider the predicament for the writers of MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000: THE MOVIE when they decided to take on THIS ISLAND EARTH. For an average MST-3K TV episode, a film is screened four or five times. To prepare Universal's '50s space-opera for roasting, the staff endured screenings that passed the golden anniversary mark. Talk about commitment—it's amazing these guys are still sentient, much less able to write enough gags to fill out the 78-minute running time.

Writing sessions were attended by MST principals Mike Nelson, Kevin Murphy, and Trace Beaulieu, producer-director Jim Mallon, and series writers Brigette Jones, Paul Chaplain, and Mary-Jo Pehl (the latter known to MSTies for her fifth-season guest appearance as the life-affirming severed head, Jan in the Pan, and for her seventh-season recurring role as Mrs. Forrester, mother to Beaulieu's mad scientist). Each screening occupied an eight-hour day, with attendees starting and stopping the tape at will. "It's the only way to do it, and it's great fun," explained Murphy. "We sit in front of a TV screen and watch this film through. The first couple of times, it's very impromptu. Everything we say that seems funny is written in a computer and marked with the corresponding time-code. We continue that way, starting and stopping. Sometimes we're going frame-by-frame, because there's so much humor to be had in one part; and sometimes there's simply nothing to be said, and we have to go through long chunks of a film over and over just to come up with something funny. That's when it gets to be a grind. Things usually peak over the first couple of days; that's when there's a tremendous amount of energy. All the initial jokes come out, many of them knee-jerk reactions to what we're seeing, and those quite often are the funniest. When we had to go back through a section that was lagging, it was a challenge."

According to Nelson, one of the hazards of the extended screening sessions was the tendency to obsess on more esoteric aspects: "If you stop the film a lot, you begin to see things that might be lesser elements of the composition of the shot. We'd key on those and make a joke, not realizing, 'The audience isn't really going to see this.' You have to be very careful about that."

Added Mallon, "We did discover that things we loathed over time are harder to pick out on a first viewing. We had to be cognizant of the fact that the whole premise is that this is the first time Mike and the 'bots are seeing the movie. Because of that, we backed away from some comments that were born out



To write the jokes, the writers watched the film over 50 times.

of watching the film over fifty times."

Complicating the process was the determination that the humor—which on TV can reach dizzyingly referential heights—be pitched to a level accessible to non-MSTies in the audience. "I have to credit the people at [Universal]," noted Mallon. "They understood that [the occasionally obscure humor is] one of the reasons people like the show. At the same time, they were caught in the conundrum of having the product appeal to as wide a mass as possible. I think that when you see the finished film, the sensibilities will be intact, though at certain junctures we made the decision to be a little broader. It's a different thing, marketing a feature film versus a TV series. There's going to be inherent differences in the product."

In the end, all agreed that the writing process originally developed to skewer seven seasons of cheesy movies has succeeded in working on MST-3K: TM. "The thing we look for most often," noted Murphy, "is what are people laughing at, what aren't people laughing at, and [we're] balancing that with jokes that we know will be funny with different audiences, maybe in different parts of the country or different age groups. Here in the Midwest, where we're not used to things like test-audiences and focus-groups, we ultimately go back to what it is that makes us laugh, and I think that's going to carry the day. In some instances, we try to anticipate what the audience would like, but there's a danger in doing that. In second-guessing yourself, you can end up pleasing nobody." **Dan Persons**

Gramercy opens the film in April.

ject two years ago, again portrays the sole human on-board the Satellite of Love. Despite slightly snazzier paint-jobs, robots Crow and Tom Servo remain the patchwork assemblages they were on TV. In keeping with the low-tech nature of the series, all puppets are operated with nothing more sophisticated than wooden-dowel head mechanisms and monofilament-driven mouths. "Mike is pretty much the same," noted Beaulieu. "He's got some new thread controlling his mouth."

What's also changed little in the transition from small screen to big is the approach the Minneapolis-based Best Brains production company took to lensing. Though the shoot moved from the 30x60-foot environs of their customary TV studio to the more spacious dimensions of Paisley Park Studios for the silhouette sequences, and subsequently to the recently opened Energy Park Studios in St. Paul for the "host" segments, the entire effort was in the can in four short weeks, with the silhouette sequences completed in two consecutive days of shooting. "A rare occurrence in film history," noted Kevin Murphy, who voices and operates Tom Servo, as well as serving as post-production supervisor and participating in the





# THIS ISLAND EARTH

## RETROSPECTIVE

*Maligned classic or overrated turkey?*

"When was the last time you saw THIS ISLAND EARTH?" was star Mike Nelson's challenge when it was suggested that certain corners of fandom might not appreciate the fact that MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000, in its first feature incarnation, was taking its scalpel to what many still consider a science-fiction classic. Well, fair enough: it could be that the MST-3K staff have seen something that everyone else missed during Cal Meacham's flying-saucer trip to the planet Metaluna. Only one way to find out: a quick trip to the friendly, specialty video store for a copy of what some have hailed as a cornerstone of science-fiction cinema.

On re-viewing the film, it becomes apparent that THIS ISLAND EARTH offers up some neat moments, but it couldn't hold a candle to the combined might of Robby, Morbius, and the whole of the Krell civilization in FORBIDDEN PLANET, MGM's similarly ambitious and more sublimely scripted science-fiction epic from 1956 (a re-write of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, no less).

Not that the Universal entry isn't built on a solid, '50s-style base: nuclear physicist and part-time jet pilot Cal Meacham (played by the entertainingly named Rex Reason) gets a taste of alien technology (via the surprise receipt of an interociter, that handy-dandy, no-home-should-be-without-one, two-way-TV and death-ray), is subsequently lured down South for a sojourn at high-browed extra-terrestrial Exeter's (Jeff Morrow) antebellum nuclear lab, and is eventually whooshed away via flying saucer to the war-ravaged planet, Metaluna. There, he and old flame Ruth Adams (Faith Domergue) get to subvert an impending invasion of Earth (the job is actually done for them by a wall that conveniently collapses on Metaluna's ruler), and grapple with an ant-like mutant (imposed on the film at the eleventh hour, according to MST-



An explosive moment of THIS ISLAND EARTH is viewed by the MST-3K crew. The '50s science-fiction film is elaborately mounted but poorly structured dramatically.

3K: TM producer-director Jim Mallon, by a Universal anxious to replicate the success of the previous year's CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON), before being whisked back home to pick up their lives pretty much where they'd been left off.

Fun, in an *Astounding Wonder Tales* sort-of way. Actually, the more one watches, THIS ISLAND EARTH, one suspects, was scripted by someone who had more respect for SF magazine covers than for what might be written within. In its favor, the film definitely delivers on a commodity increasingly missing from recent SF efforts: the much-vaunted Sense of Wonder. There are cool gadgets (the gee-whiz interociter), cool vehicles (robot airplanes, high-speed monorails, and Exeter's palatial saucer), and a *really* cool alien city (some vividly surreal matte paintings by the Universal art department). In one, Technicolor-enhanced package, a kid with model airplanes on his shelves and Rocky Jones in his head could get all the space-opera he ever wished for.

Well, so long as he didn't wish for a sophisticated plot-line. For all its luxurious trappings (and even the MST-3K crew will acknowl-

edge that the film's production values are top-notch), THIS ISLAND EARTH does suffer from notable scripting deficiencies. With a first hour occupied by heavy doses of exposition—miles of footage unreel to explain all those bizarre, green power rays, mysterious electronic components, and aliens setting up shop in the heart of Dixie—the last thirty minutes are forced to carry what should have been the real meat of the film. The trip to Metaluna, the glimpse of interplanetary war, our heroes' eventual escape—it all gets crammed into a Cliff Notes condensation of what SF literature likes to call the Tour of Wonders, with Meacham and Adams serving as little more than passive witnesses to whatever miracles Exeter wishes to trot before them. (This ultimately results in the film's unintentional, comic highlight: a brisk, monorail tour of war-torn Metaluna where—telescoped plot-line intersecting with an apparently tight budget—Morrow must invoke images of surrounding devastation by pointing off-screen and announcing where the planet's architectural marvels *used* to stand).

Such flaws would be notable in a film from any decade. THIS IS-

LAND EARTH compounds the damage by exhibiting stylistic tics that position the film as a work very much of its time. Aside from the rather dubious notion that a surreptitious, nuclear laboratory would attempt to lure scientists by indiscriminately sending out bits of alien technology parcel-post (in the real world, a free-bar is usually enough of a draw), the earthlings reciprocate through behavior that speaks volumes about America's state of mind during the post-war boom. When Meacham is prompted to expound upon the wonders of the interociter, the renowned nuclear physicist bizarrely begins conjecturing on the machine's ability to pave roads. More peculiar is the scientist's rather passive stance against

Exeter: even though Meacham expresses an overt skepticism about the alien's claims of honorable intent, the human never quite works up the gumption to directly challenge his captor. This strange, semi-paranoid complacency—smelling distinctly of America's fears of inadequacy in the face of the perceived threat of Communism—is evident in many of the film's characters, never more hilariously than during a formal dinner scene in which the assembled scientists discreetly avoid mention of their hosts' alienness, as if those Jiffy-Pop brows were the interplanetary equivalent of a bit of spinach caught in someone's teeth.

So, did the proprietors of MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 err in singling out THIS ISLAND EARTH for skewering? Not in the least. With its pulp sensibilities, cardboard characterizations, and "Hey, look, there's a mutant!" finale, there's material aplenty for Mike and the 'bots to deflate. Does that mean THIS ISLAND EARTH is destined to surrender its classic status to an unending chorus of laughter? Well, I was a kid once, and that interociter *still* looks like a cool gadget to me.

**Dan Persons**



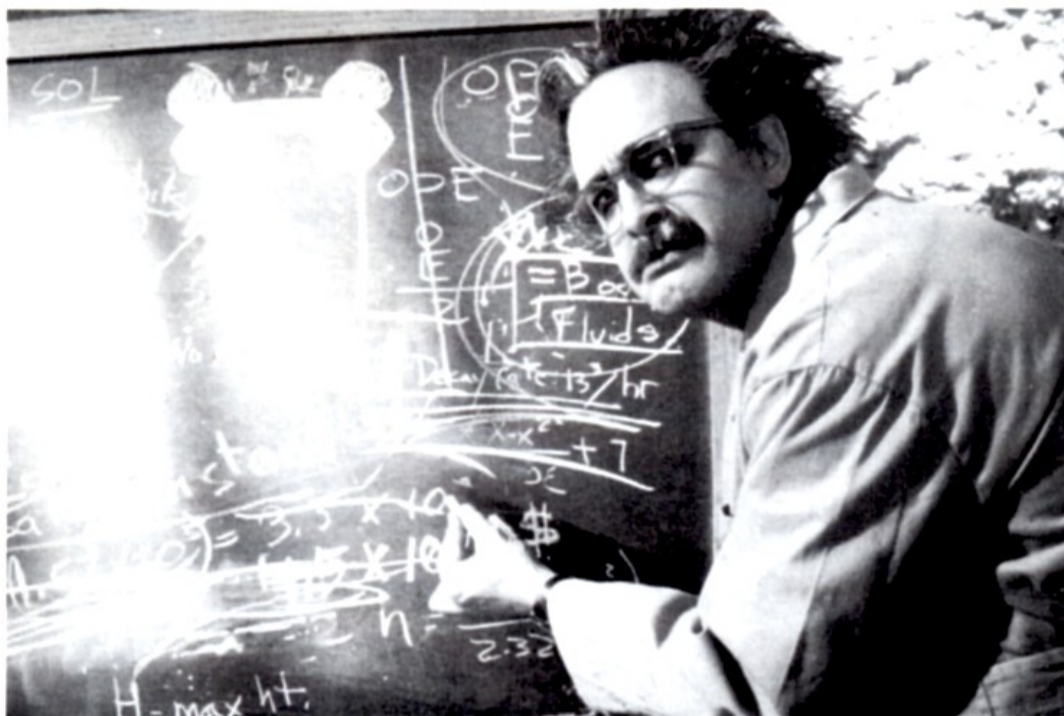
writing. "We finished fifty percent of our film in the first two days of production. We were able to deliver close to sixty pages."

That mind-boggling rate is part-and-parcel of a production system that Hodgson and company developed for the TV show. The basic concept: seat Nelson, Beaulieu, and Murphy before a blue-screen cyclorama, start up a time-coded playback of the movie on an off-camera monitor, and let the camera roll as the trio watches and wisecracks. For the film, Mallon broke the silhouette sequence into four fifteen-minute chunks (requiring some editing of the original movie), and recorded the performance on both 35mm film and 3/4-inch video to provide both a reference copy for later evaluation and a video feed for the two puppeteers. Each sequence was shot twice, with Mike and the 'bots reading their lines, in real-time, from scripts.

Nelson noted that, by the end of the pre-production phase (including no less fifty screenings of THIS ISLAND EARTH and about six off-camera run-throughs of the resulting material), scripts and video playback were almost vestigial items: "There's something liberating about having seen this thing so many times. You can concentrate very much on the reading, because you know you're not going to miss the line. By the time we actually shot, we were so well-rehearsed that I'm guessing none of us actually needed [time-codes]."

More complicated were the host segments inserted between the silhouette sequences to show day-to-day life aboard the Satellite of Love. Whereas on TV these segments are done with a single camera before a compact set designed by Hodgson and Beaulieu, for the film Mallon expanded the environs in several ways: bringing in MST-3K tool master Jeff Maynard to design and build a larger main set; expanding a corridor set from the four-foot-high miniature on TV to full size (raised four feet off the floor to accommodate the puppeteers); giving the audience their first glance at Tom Servo's room (he has an interociter in there); and introducing (gasp!) cross-cutting. The resulting shoot—with a fifty-person crew, as opposed to the show's ten, and a three-week schedule, in comparison to the show's two days—was a new experience for many involved. "There's so many differences between film and television," said Mallon. "Primarily, you work so much more slowly on film, and everything has to be absolutely correct. It's a much more tedious and time-consuming process."

**"This was like getting on a bicycle, albeit a bigger one," said Beaulieu. "It's basically the same thing, except if we blew a take, it was a lot more expensive."**



Trace Beaulieu's Dr Forrester appears solo in the feature, because of the sixth season defection of sidekick Frank Conniff as TV's Frank.

Although all three principals agreed that the atmosphere on the set was convivial enough ("We got lunch and everything," Murphy noted), there were aspects of feature process that some found off-putting. "That was like getting on a bicycle, albeit a bigger one," said Beaulieu. "It's basically the same thing, except if we blew a take, it was a lot more expensive."

"It's oversimplifying," added Nelson, "but in the TV show we sort of set up the lights, point the camera, and go. In the movie, the guy who filmed it, Jeff Stonehouse, kept wanting to point the camera over and over again. That's something, apparently, that a lot of movie-makers like to do. That was sort of annoying; I got pretty surly."

"The TV show, although tightly scripted, is still a bit improvisational; the set is a fairly loose environment. On a movie set, just by its nature, you're doing fairly shorter takes and doing them over and over again, so it's a little more mechanical. You're not allowed to improvise at all; you have to hit your marks—you're basically a meat-puppet, which was my nick-name on the set. It was exciting in its own way. I don't think it's something I'd want to do every day. I don't think it's something that people will allow me to do everyday, so that works out well."

Shooting for MST-3K: TM went from March to April, 1995. Based on the response of preview audiences, the film has since undergone several looping sessions to re-work jokes and allow time for audience reaction. Noted Mallon, "There's been a lot of work on the jokes. Mike is superb at

ADR, by the way. It's one of his hidden talents that didn't manifest itself until the film." ("I've been compared to Hackman," added Nelson, operating in full MST cross-reference mode.)

As for qualms about taking on THIS ISLAND EARTH, a film that many consider a science-fiction classic, the MST-3K crew is unanimous in their conviction that audiences won't have any trouble recognizing the '50s space-opera for the gobbler it is. "Initially," said Beaulieu, "I was a little concerned, because I knew it was a popular film. I had only seen it as a kid and mostly remembered just the monster. Upon watching it again, I said, 'You know, this was probably an okay film at the time, but...' First of all: the hero doesn't do anything; he's very ineffectual. The aliens who come to conquer the world in essence run out of gas; they go back to their planet, and that's a dump because they're being attacked by their neighbors. Nothing really happens."

Added Nelson, "A lot of people said, 'That's a classic.' But it's kind of like the Mark Twain thing: a classic is a book that everyone wants to say they have read but nobody wants to read. It's not a good movie; you've got to look at it again. It's really dull and really goofy, and it's got a big, stupid monster. It's shot really well, and the special effects are just cheesy enough that it fits our mold."

Well, if anyone knows from cheesy, it's the crew that was able to recognize the comic potential in the Gregory Peck and Gene Hackman starrer, MAROONED. Maybe the execs at Universal and Gramercy took some consolation in that fact, rescheduling the film's release from a less-than-hospitable slot in January to a more optimistic date in the spring. With the film now firmly, and happily, set for April, the MST crew expresses no consternation over the studio's perceived bout of indecision. "I like to think of those high-powered strategy meetings, where they figure out what the release date is," observed Nelson. "[Imagine] the big executive asking their underlings, 'When should we put out the doll show?' It's not exactly WATERWORLD."

"That's a whole other side of the business that we know very little about," admitted Mallon. "It's Universal's film, at that point. If we enjoy the same luck with the movie as with the TV series, the audience will find us, wherever we are. A lot is going to depend on how the critics like it, and gee, we have a job that critics dream to have. We're hopeful that they'll find a lot of positive things to talk about." □



# THINNER

**Tom Holland returns to the big screen with this Stephen King adaptation.**

By Steven LaCroix

To director, Tom Holland, things could not be better, now that Stephen King's THINNER is finally being filmed, after a seven year wait. Holland, known for FRIGHT NIGHT and CHILD'S PLAY, is no stranger to tackling King material, having directed last year's THE LANGOLIERS for ABC.

"King fans can expect a movie that captures the spirit of the book," Holland explained. "It's a hell of a good ride. It's a drama that has thematic value to it. It's about moral culpability. It's about a man who refuses to accept responsibility and finally ends up eating, both figuratively and literally, his own just desserts. I think it's a very strongly acted film. I think the film, like the book, works on a number of different levels, and it certainly works on more levels than just plot and horror."

THINNER is produced by Richard P. Rubinstein and Mitchell Galin. Michael McDowell (BEETLEJUICE) adapted the script. The cast includes Robert John Burke (ROBOCOP 3), Joe Mantegna (GODFATHER III), Michael Constantine (PRANCER) and Karie Wuhrer (BEASTMASTER II). King fans will be tickled to know that he has a cameo as well—as a pharmacist named, "Mr. Banghor," after Bangor, Maine, where the author resides. Paramount Pictures will release the film domestically in April, and world-wide rights are being licensed by Spelling Films International.

As with LANGOLIERS, Holland is filming THINNER in King's home state, Maine. This time, however, the location is the small, touristy, coastal village of Camden.

Why Maine, when half of the book takes place in a fictional town named



In THINNER, Robert John Burke (ROBOCOP 3) plays Billy Halleck, an overweight attorney who is cursed to grow thin after killing a gypsy.

Fairview, Connecticut? Because the scene shifts to Maine later on, and because it made sense to film in one location, Holland decided Camden could easily pose for an up-scale Connecticut town. While location scouting in May, Holland discovered other various sights between Bangor and Portland, which he thought would fit the movie. Also, filming a movie in Maine will undoubtedly lend that New England feel. Other King movies—PET SEMATARY, GRAVEYARD SHIFT, and THE LANGOLIERS—have already benefited from

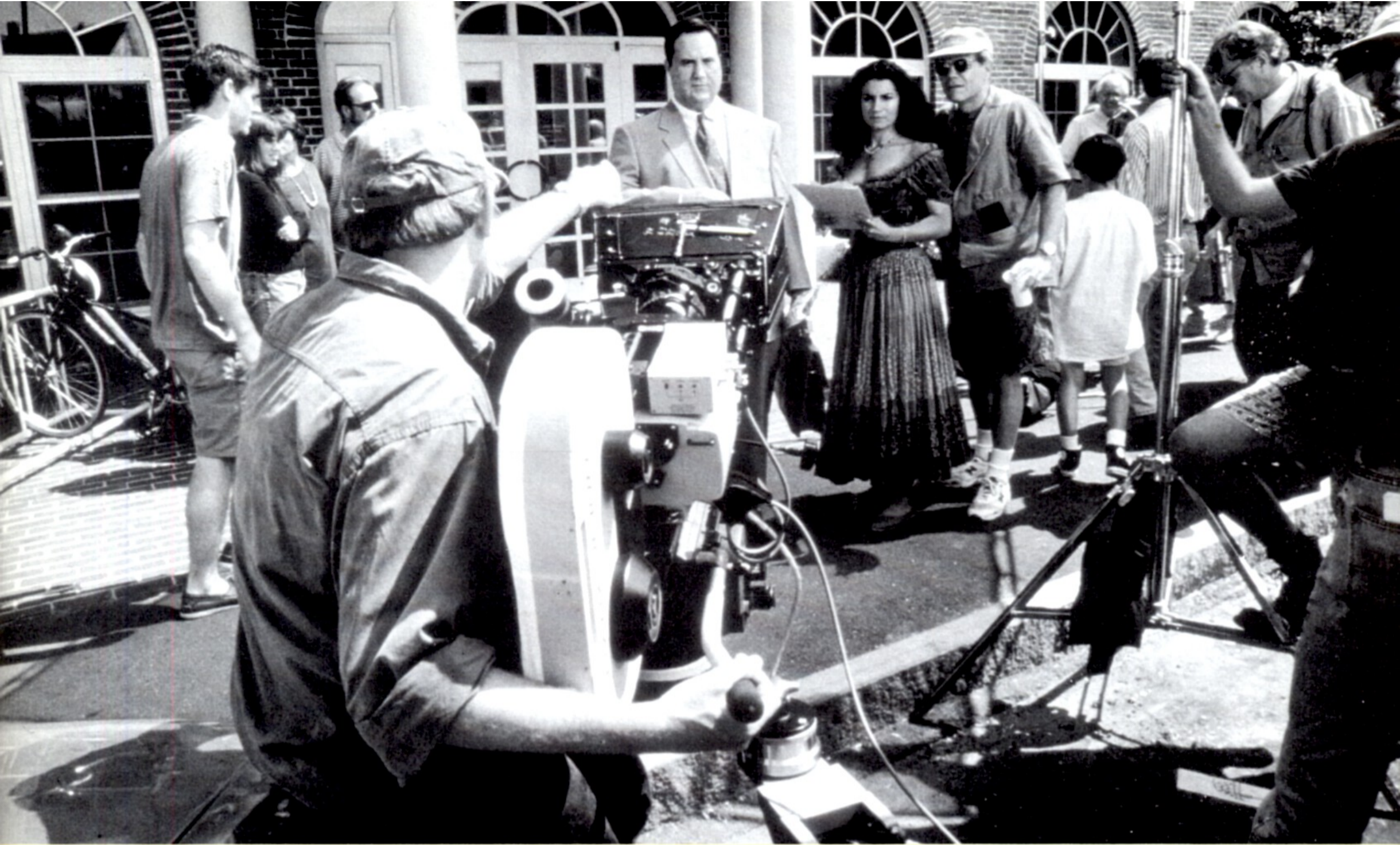
what the author routinely calls home.

But why did THINNER take seven years to get the green light? "There was a variety of reasons," producer Richard P. Rubinstein explained. "In some cases, they said no because of the budget. In some cases, they said no because they didn't think the effect could be done correctly. In some cases, they said no because they thought that this would have echoes of AIDS, which would be too disturbing for people. I think one thing that PET SEMATARY proved was that you don't need an up ending in order to have a very successful movie. THINNER is not as horrific as PET SEMATARY; it has some fantasy elements but is a lot closer to MISERY, in terms of its pure drama."

*Thinner* was first published in 1985; however, book sales did not soar until it was discovered that the author, "Richard Bachman," was really a pseudonym under which Stephen King had published a series of titles, such as *The Running Man*, *Rage*, *Roadwork*, and *The Long Walk*.

The novel is about an overweight attorney, Billy Halleck (Burke), who accidentally kills a gypsy woman with his car. After pulling a few strings, Billy is not charged with her death. Outraged by the decision, the leader of the gypsies, Taduz Lempke (Michael Constantine), brushes Billy's cheek outside the courthouse and mutters the word "thinner." Billy starts losing weight—a lot of weight. Desperate for help, he calls upon a man who owes him a favor, Ginelli (Mantegna). Together, they search for the band of gypsies, believing that this is the only way to defeat the curse. Billy, meanwhile, is getting thinner and thinner; if he doesn't find Lempke soon, he will ultimately be reduced to a





Tom Holland (in cap and sunglasses) confers with his cast on location in Camden, Maine. The director, who helmed King's *THE LANGOLIERS* for ABC, brings *THINNER* to the big screen after a seven year wait.

skeleton.

"It's about the monster within yourself in a way, and to me, that's more frightening," said Mantegna. "It's like *THE EXORCIST* or something like that. It is something that makes you think, 'Could this happen?'—as opposed to some green-eyed devil with horns that pop out of the brow or something a little harder to swallow."

For Holland, the relationship with Stephen King started six years ago, when he was first asked by Warner Brothers to direct *THINNER*. Because of delays and setbacks, Holland and King ending up doing *THE LANGOLIERS* first, which really got their working relationship off the ground. "I'm so happy with his material, and I believe he's happy with my direction," claimed Holland. "I had read the book, *Four Past Midnight*, because the last story has the kids in it going to see *CHILD'S PLAY*, so I knew since he wrote that he really liked *CHILD'S PLAY*."

The filming of *THINNER* started in mid-August, with a budget of approximately \$17 million, and wrapped the first week of November. The weather in Maine could not have been more cooperative, according to the director: "We've been really

lucky, because it's been drought up here, so we haven't been rained out," said Holland. "It's a long schedule, and it's long work, because Bob Burke has to be in the makeup chair, you know, four to six hours a day. So, I'm really only shooting half a day, because that's all I have with my lead after he's got the makeup on."

Greg Cannom, two-time Academy Award-winning makeup artist (for *MRS. DOUBTFIRE* and *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*), was responsible for the body suit that Burke wore to give the illusion that he weighed over 300 hundred pounds.

Burke as Billy accepts a flier from Adriana Inchaustegui, playing one of the gypsies who put a curse on Billy.



Supervising Cannom's work on set were Bob Laden and Vincent Guastini (*LANGOLIERS*). "Cannom laid it out, and we're trying to make it work," Laden explained. "It's been tricky, because some of the stages along the way you have to fudge a little bit. It was just impossible to test everything on film beforehand. So, sometimes, when you're shooting, you're testing too."

"The difference between this and *THE LANGOLIERS* was that that was a creature show," said Guastini. "This one involved being on set, applying makeup and prosthetics, and doing whatever additional effects needed to be done. This is a big makeup show."

Is *THINNER* a horror movie? Guastini thinks before answering. "I know some directors who get sensitive about that, when you start asking them, well is this a horror movie? Yeah, I say it is, in my opinion. But what makes it a little bit cooler is that you care about Billy. It's got its own style; it's got some pretty broad characters. I mean, Lempke—he's this cancer ridden, old gypsy with a giant [tumor] on his nose," Guastini chuckles. "Is it Shakespeare? I doubt it. It's a horror movie with a lot of drama." □



# TOMORROW MAN

## Producer Alan Spencer on his science fiction

By Dennis Fischer

An android sent back through time to the present day to prevent the extinction of mankind is the premise of *THE TOMORROW MAN*, a science fiction pilot and proposed series starring Julian Sands (*WARLOCK*, *BOXING HELENA*), Giancarlo Esposito, and Craig Wasson. The pilot is the brainchild of Alan Spencer, creator-producer of the cult series *SLEDGE HAMMER*. Spencer began writing comedy at the ripe age of 16 by providing jokes for the *MORK & MINDY* series, graduating to other Paramount sitcoms. He also wrote the genre comedy *HEXED*. Produced by Fox Television for CBS, the network had no plans to air the TV movie at press time.

Spencer has a genuine love for the genre and has given thought to what would make a science fiction show appealing. He first tried to concoct a sci-fi *SLEDGE HAMMER* spoof for CBS called *GALAXY BEAT* which also went unaired. Starring Tracy Scoggins, Gregory Harrison and Roddy McDowell, who supplied the voice of a frog-like alien, which also went unaired.

With *THE TOMORROW MAN* Spencer decided to tackle a legitimate, straight science fiction show, but discovered that he had been typecast as a comedy writer. "I felt like Bela Lugosi," admitted Spencer. "I decided to write it on spec." Spencer ended up submitting the 20th Century-Fox project to CBS, who decided they needed a science fiction show for the eight o'clock family hour. "The response I got from the script was that they were surprised I wrote this because it seemed very intelligent," laughed Spencer. "That was supposed to be a compliment. It's rare to sell pilots on spec, it's almost unheard of to write them. This was that rarity."

Spencer said *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* provided his main inspiration for the series, and proclaimed Fox as a genre haven for science fiction projects. "If you were to remake [DAY]," said Spencer, "I think [Julian Sands] is the first person you would get to play the role that Michael Rennie did or something in that vogue. *TOMORROW MAN* wasn't written with any specific actors in mind. He just happened to read it and responded to it. He usually does-



Android Julian Sands and Giancarlo Esposito as the computer expert who teams up with him to alter history each week, a Fox pilot for CBS.

n't look at television scripts, but he liked this enough that he was willing to commit to doing it."

Sands plays an android named Kenn, possessing knowledge of all future events, which he uses to alter present events to prevent a future catastrophe. To help him in his mission, he picks Jonathan Driscoll (Giancarlo Esposito), an artificial intelligence expert computer programmer with far-out concepts who has been ostracized, who proves to be the only one capable of repairing Kenn's circuitry.

Spencer said the ethnic casting of Esposito was a natural outgrowth of the genre. "In the original *STAR TREK* they made a big deal about everyone being together," said Spencer. "The next level of progress is not to comment on it. Just take it for granted. We tried to keep a broad spectrum of casting throughout the show."

Kenn's antagonist, Dr. Simon Galloway, is played by Craig Wasson, who doggedly pursues the android in order to obtain valuable knowledge about the future. This adds an element of *THE FUGITIVE* which was common to many attempted science fiction shows of

the past, including *THE IMMORTAL* and *LOGAN'S RUN*.

"When you talk about the morality of rewriting history, Wasson's character has a different moral purview about what should be changed and what shouldn't," said Spencer. "Galloway isn't bad, he's just someone with a different point of view about the course of human history. It's not really clear at first what he's up to. You keep guessing about what he'll do or how far he'll go."

Spencer believes viewers will be intrigued by the relationship between Kenn and Driscoll. "It's a buddy relationship almost like a *MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.* or *I SPY*, that kind of a mode," said Spencer. "They go on specific missions each time. They are correcting certain events without corrupting history overall. They are strategically amending certain events to prevent an overall catastrophe that happens in the far-off future. Julian's character is there to set certain things straight, almost imperceptibly. He has the knowledge of all history yet to happen from published reports, meaning newspapers, from the time from whence he came."

The series acknowledges the limitations of the information media where the written accounts often omit important information behind the reported events, causing the pair some difficulties in trying to accomplish their mission. "The premiere episode deals with a conspiracy that was chalked up to an aerospace accident," said Spencer, "and they actually uncover something else. He's there to prevent an accident and it turns into something larger and more ominous, so even though he knows what's going to happen next, he doesn't know everything between the lines, or the truth of it."

Time travel and what-if stories have long been staples of science fiction, and Spencer demonstrates an awareness of what's been done in the past. The pilot deals with an aerospace disaster that would result in funding cuts for deep space exploration. "There are certain end results that, even though they are imperceptible for centuries in the future, will have an effect," said Spencer. "It's an interesting concept whether it is Jack Finney or an *OUTER LIMITS* episode like 'The Man Who Was Never Born.' T2 picked up on it, [as does] Harlan Ellison's 'City on the Edge



# AN

## series for CBS.

of Forever' from STAR TREK.

"THE TOMORROW MAN's a meditation within that kind of a mode. Usually people go back to deal with just one event, usually about whether people live or die. Some corrections might involve a relationship that needs to be cemented. BACK TO THE FUTURE did some of those elements, too." Planned episodes would deal with such stories as an innocent man about to be executed in prison or an airplane that is going to crash, carrying a renowned scientist on the verge of a major breakthrough.

The director of the \$5 million pilot was Bill D'Elia, who usually works in dramas such as CHICAGO HOPE and PICKET FENCES, though he has directed for THE ADVENTURES OF LOIS AND CLARK. The special effects have been supervised by Chris Woods, who worked on the SUPER MARIO BROS. and ADDAMS FAMILY movies. The special makeup effects are done by Dave Miller, who worked on CONEHEADS. Spencer is co-executive producer with Howard Klein, and the producer is Cyrus Yavneh.

Spencer noted that the series emphasis will not be on effects or technobabble. "Usually the two-hour premieres of these science fiction shows are big effects blow-outs," observed Spencer, "and that's never replicated on a week-to-week basis. [Our pilot]'s pretty conservative as far as the amount of effects. There aren't too many alien lifeforms and there's not a two-minute crawl of narrative just to explain the premise at the beginning."

Spencer feels that many attempted science fiction series of the past have been bogged down either by too much exposition in which the writers show off their research or by depicting a downbeat future that viewers are reluctant to revisit. He credits Gene Roddenberry and STAR TREK with demonstrating how to do science fiction with appealing characters and a future one would want to return to.

"It's tough for me to envision someone opening a can of beer and saying, 'Honey, let's watch that show again where the future is shit!'" said Spencer. "We want a show where even though there is a catastrophe that happens in the future, it can be prevented. I don't want to say it has a message, because usually I find messages pretentious or presumptive, but if there is any kind of little moral to it, it's that all of us make a difference." □



THE TOMORROW MAN, an android sent from the future to save mankind from destruction, makeup by Dave Miller. Below: The android, Kenn, takes the form of Julian Sands, aided by Giancarlo Esposito.





# THE STENDHAL SYNDROME

**The prodigal son of Italian gialli returns home for a hard-core horror effort.**

**A** lone in the lair of a serial killer, the policewoman is bound to a filthy mattress by electrical wires that bite deeper and deeper into the flesh of her wrists and ankles as she struggles. Suddenly, a razor blade fills the screen; through its central hole, her wide-eyed terror is glimpsed as it rapidly advances to slice a deep cut down the left side of her face. Disoriented and terrified, she looks around her concrete prison and, first, sees her torturer erotically sucking the barrel of the gun he's just pushed between her legs and, second, notices obscene graffiti covering the walls. Amazingly, the sprayed-on images come to life: a hypodermic syringe flies through the air; a crudely drawn devil with a giant phallus pulls itself off the wall and advances toward her. Screaming, she pulls two bed springs out of the rotting mattress and plunges them into her tormentor's neck.

Welcome to the latest nightmare from the imagination of Dario Argento. Destined to be one of the most controversial sequences the writer-director has ever committed to celluloid, this pivotal set piece occurs halfway through *LA SINDROME DI STENDHAL* (*THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*), a long-in-gestation giallo picture from the undisputed Maestro of Menace Italian-style. Relaxing between takes on the claustrophobic "Graffiti Room" set



On the Graffiti Room set, Dario Argento (center) directs his actress-daughter Asia (left) and d.p. Giuseppe Rotunno

built in an unused warehouse in Rome's Furio Camillo district, Argento said, "*THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* is a return to the type of strong material I used in the '70s with *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE* and *DEEP RED*. While filming has progressed, my gut feeling has made me think this will be as gory and as hard as *TENEBRAE*. It shares a similar theme of psychotic transference, too. There's nothing for children here because I made a conscious decision to go

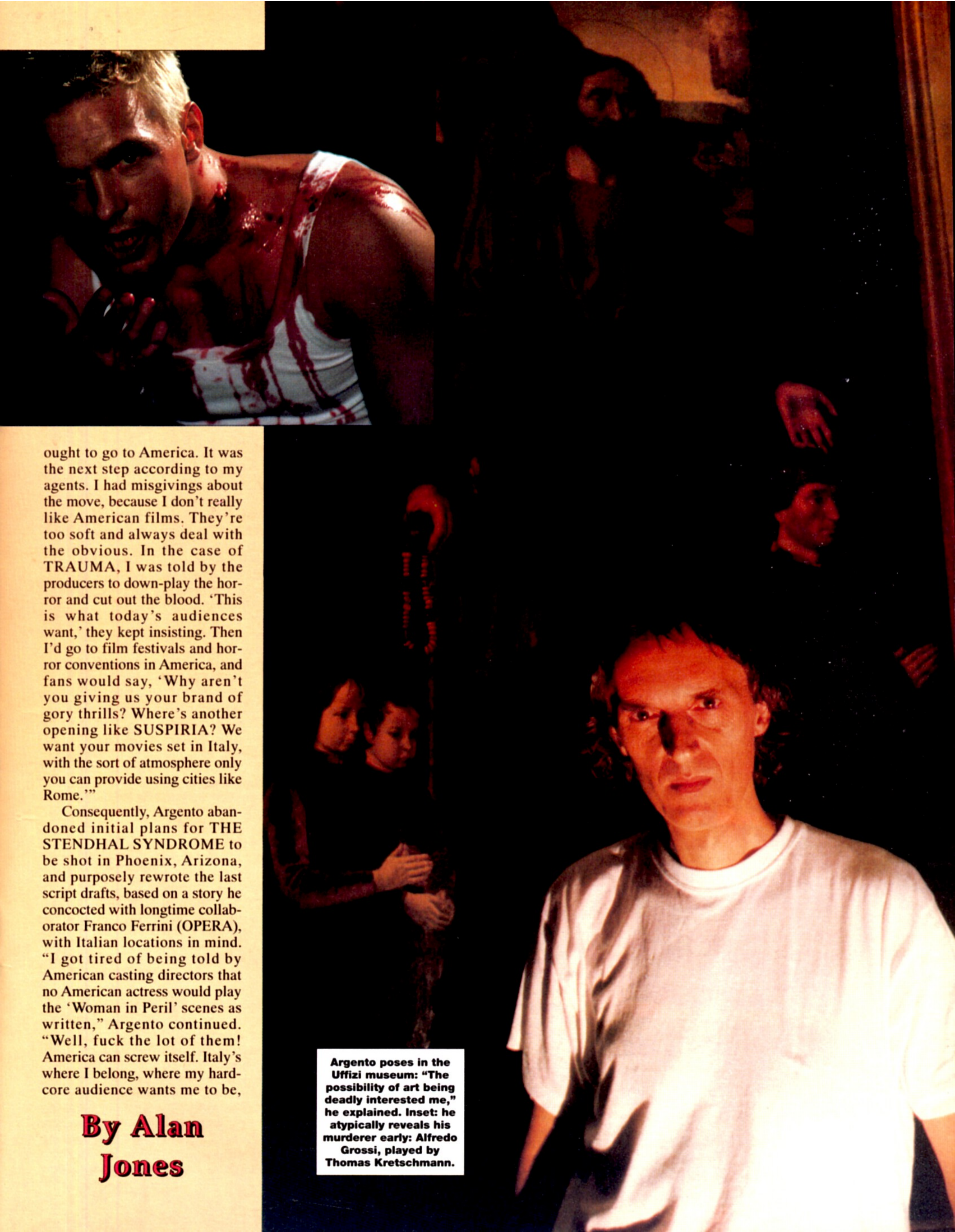
for the frightening and daring extreme I was always famous for."

Argento makes that statement with more than a hint of knowing resignation. His last box office hit on Italian shores was *OPERA* (1987), but that success was not duplicated internationally, as this bona fide masterpiece failed to appear in most markets except on video. Because excessive violence was being frowned upon in territories outside Italy (where still everything pretty much goes), Argento decided to modify his

approach and turn to a more traditional style of horror. The result was the 1990 Edgar Allan Poe anthology *TWO EVIL EYES*, on which he and his *DAWN OF THE DEAD* colleague George Romero each directed an episode. The disappointment of this endeavor sent Argento back to his giallo roots with the Minneapolis-based *TRAUMA*. But that too failed to deliver significant returns when barely released in 1993.

Argento remarked, "I believed people when they said I





ought to go to America. It was the next step according to my agents. I had misgivings about the move, because I don't really like American films. They're too soft and always deal with the obvious. In the case of TRAUMA, I was told by the producers to down-play the horror and cut out the blood. 'This is what today's audiences want,' they kept insisting. Then I'd go to film festivals and horror conventions in America, and fans would say, 'Why aren't you giving us your brand of gory thrills? Where's another opening like SUSPIRIA? We want your movies set in Italy, with the sort of atmosphere only you can provide using cities like Rome.'"

Consequently, Argento abandoned initial plans for THE STENDHAL SYNDROME to be shot in Phoenix, Arizona, and purposely rewrote the last script drafts, based on a story he concocted with longtime collaborator Franco Ferrini (OPERA), with Italian locations in mind. "I got tired of being told by American casting directors that no American actress would play the 'Woman in Peril' scenes as written," Argento continued. "Well, fuck the lot of them! America can screw itself. Italy's where I belong, where my hard-core audience wants me to be,

**By Alan Jones**

**Argento poses in the Uffizi museum: "The possibility of art being deadly interested me," he explained. Inset: he atypically reveals his murderer early: Alfredo Grossi, played by Thomas Kretschmann.**



# STENDHAL SYNDROME

## THE ART OF ARGENTO

*Aesthetics of Ambiguity.*



**C**ritical responses to the films of Dario Argento tend to be divided into two general camps: those who laud his visual artistry and those who deplore the incoherence of his narratives. Although the latter correctly identify the lack of traditional linear structures as typical of Argento's films, they usually stop short of the obvious conclusion that such a persistent characteristic is, in the works of an experienced director, purely intentional. Argento's painstaking attention to visual detail does not merely serve the central demands of conventional plot, as would be the case in most North American genre films. Rather, both stylistic and narrative elements serve an overriding aesthetic which is, in turn, derived from the director's unique world view.

The world, as we see it through Argento's eyes, is treacherously deceptive. This director refuses to play by conventional cinematic "rules;" and audiences, whose expectations have been conditioned by convention, often find themselves struggling to construct logical narrative explanations for what they see on the screen. Argento, however, anticipates and counters all attempts to explain or give conventional closure to his texts, maintaining instead a maddening tone of ambiguity.

This ambiguity is achieved primarily through techniques of fragmentation and contradiction. The camera may move aimlessly, picking out seemingly irrelevant objects in unexpected close-ups, or it may shift abruptly in a disorienting move from one point-of-view to another. Visual aesthetic frequently takes precedence over plot, as in the famous tracking shot in *TENEBRAE*, which pulls away from the interior setting, leaving the central characters, and traces a circuitous path along the building's exterior architectural details, before reentering the scene of the action through another window. The result is an unnerving but eerily beautiful sequence which ultimately emphasizes and intensifies the film's thematic mysteries.

Architecture frequently defines and exaggerates the physical and psychological spaces of Argento's narratives. His sets recall the decorative excesses of Fellini in his most surreal mode, setting the power of baroque line against the languid decadence of Art Nouveau, the hard edge of Bauhaus modernism against the often barbaric gesture of abstract expressionism. The physical becomes irrational: secret doors and passages open into impossible spaces, moving the viewer from the world of the plausible to a dreamlike place in which the normal rules of narrative credibility no longer apply. In *OPERA* and *CREEPERS*, buildings whose rustic exteriors reflect their idyllic natural settings open to reveal unimaginable horrors. In *DEEP RED*, Argento's characters are dwarfed by the looming presences of classical statuary and cyclopean buildings, creating an almost hallucinatory sense of distorted proportions. These constant visual disjunctions of space and place underscore narrative ambiguities, or create ambiguities

ties by setting up contradictions between plot and image.

Argento's painterly use of color shows the influence of other great Italian colorists. The golden exteriors of *SUSPIRIA* and the baroque richness of reds and browns in *OPERA* bring Bertolucci to mind, whereas the clear pastels and high contrasts of *TENEBRAE*'s futuristic Rome resemble those of Antonioni's *London*. The palette is always meticulously controlled; in the case of *SUSPIRIA*, for example, the color was manipulated in the lab to achieve sequences of pure, fairy-tale primaries. *TENEBRAE*'s icy modernism, balanced with the precision of a Mondrian canvas, is punctuated with startling slashes of red, which disrupt and reorganize the composition, transforming intellectual calm into emotional brutality.

Argento is a master of misdirection, teasing audiences with misleading possibilities, forcing them to participate in constant narrative revisions as his films unfold. His characters, too, repeatedly interpret and misinterpret what they see. In Argento's world, visual evidence can never be taken as fact: victims are really murderers; refuges become traps; portraits turn out to be mirrors; and puddles are openings into underground lakes. His musical scores are equally misleading, often contrasting with the visual and psychological elements of the film, and raising even more questions about the reliability of our assumptions.

Although Argento's narratives mimic the conventional (murders are committed; characters attempt to solve the puzzle; the villains are eventually revealed and dispatched), normality is never restored. The reliable signs of an orderly universe have been subtly altered, and assumptions about the nature of reality can no longer be taken for granted. Most horror films return us to the point at which we entered; Argento's ambiguities propel us into a new and uncertain space. His concern is not the imitative representation of "reality," but the depiction of the mystery at the heart of what we assume to be real. To this end, he is willing to take the artistic risk of disturbing and challenging his audiences. Unfortunately, in North America, these intentions have too often gone unappreciated; accustomed to taking a passive role in relation to cinema, viewers may be unable to meet the demands which Argento makes of them. But for those who are willing to actively accompany Argento on his journey into the ambiguous unknown, the trip is almost certain to be well worth the effort.

**Patricia Moir**

At left is an example of painting in motion: *TENEBRAE*'s canvas "is punctuated with startling slashes of red, which disrupt and reorganize the composition, transforming intellectual calm into emotional brutality." Top of page: Back in form, Argento taps a similar vein in his latest giallo work, *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*.





and where I'm staying."

Indeed, STENDHAL SYNDROME finds Argento going back to basics in a big way. He's deliberately styled it after his three early works, dubbed the "Animal Trilogy": THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE, CAT O'NINE TAILS and FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET. In common with those, he is entirely responsible for penning the final screenplay. Locations in Rome, Florence, and Viterbo, with interiors filmed at Cinecitta, will lend the palpable Italianate atmosphere and heavily ornamented baroque styles so beloved by his ardent followers. The director of photography is Giuseppe "Beppe" Rotunno, the world-renowned cinematographer, most notably linked to Fellini's dazzling confections, plus Bob Fosse's ALL THAT JAZZ and Mike Nichols' WOLF. Argento stated, "My best work has always used top-class lighting cameramen like Vittorio Storaro [CRYSTAL PLUMAGE], Luciano Tovoli [SUSPIRIA, TENEBRAE] and Ronnie Taylor [OPERA]. This will be no exception."

The special visual effects are the work of Argento veteran Sergio Stivaletti, who has worked on every one of his Italian movies since PHENOMENON (U.S. title: CREEPERS). Composer Ennio Morricone is back on board too, after last supplying Argento with haunting themes for the "Animal Trilogy." And the family connection, begun by his father Salvatore and continued with his brother Claudio, moves to the next generation as both Argento's daughters, Asia and Fiore, are working on STENDHAL SYNDROME. Asia heads the cast, while Fiore (who acted in PHENOMENON and the Argento-produced DEMONS) is learning the filmmaking ropes as a production assistant. Then there's Argento's first assistant director. It's his longtime script collaborator (FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET), close friend, co-owner of their retail business "Profondo Rosso," and director in his own right (STARCRASH)—Luigi Cozzi. "I've never seen Dario happier or more in control," said

## ACTRESS ASIA ARGENTO

**"Originally, Anna was a black belt, but I asked Dario to change it to boxing. I took up the sport because a fan punched me. In the movie I can take on any man and kick his ass!"**



Often criticized for his portrayal of women as victims, Argento this time gives us a strong female lead, who can handle a gun and throw a punch.

Cozzi. "He's surrounded by people who love and admire him. One of the reasons why I think his experiences in America were so miserable is because no one knew him there or how colossal his reputation was. Here Dario is a huge name and, although this may seem an obvious point, he speaks the same language. He can call up the Uffizi Gallery in Florence and ask for permission to be the only filmmaker ever to be allowed to shoot there, and they will say yes because of who he is. No one cared in the States, but in Italy Dario is God."

**A**rgento has always agonized over his pictures in the early writing and pre-production stages, but STENDHAL SYNDROME had a more tortuous genesis than anything he's done before. After TRAUMA failed to live up to sales expectations around the world, Argento found himself in deep financial trouble, and he closed his ADC Production offices in Rome for a necessary



restructuring period. At this time he was considering several project options: an American remake of his directing debut, THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE; a big-budget spaghetti western; a Japanese offer to direct a TV movie entitled NORTH POINT. Then there was the plan to rescue the ailing career of director Lucio Fulci (ZOMBIE) from the bargain basement video dumpster by producing a new version of THE MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM titled LA MASCHERA DI CERA/GASTON LEROUX'S WAX MASK. The fifth option was to

headline a new RAI television suspense series titled 13 GIALLI D'AUTORE (13 THRILLERS BY THE AUTHOR or, for export, DARIO ARGENTO'S LITTLE BOOK OF MYSTERIES)—along the lines of his landmark 1972-73 four-part LA PORTA SUL BUIO (THE DOOR TO DARKNESS), which more than anything made Argento a household name and, because he introduced each segment, crystallized his reputation as Italy's Alfred Hitchcock. There was also a rumor Argento might be co-producing an American TV series with REANIMATOR producer Brian Yuzna, called SEVEN DEADLY SINS.

The last plan was to produce an update of THE GOLEM, the Jewish myth about the Prague rabbi who constructs a stone man to defend his people against a pogrom. A pet project of Argento's for years (he was eager to

cash in on the classic horror revival begun by BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA), THE GOLEM was first suggested by scriptwriter Gianni Romoli (TRAUMA) as a follow-up to Michele Soavi's THE CHURCH, which Argento produced. When all three combined to make LA SETTA (THE SECT/THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER) instead, Franco Ferrini wrote a screenplay for Lamberto Bava to direct; but because Bava's star was in the ascendant, thanks to the huge ratings achieved by the Romoli-written fairy tale TV-movie FANTAGHIRO (THE

CAVE OF THE GOLDEN ROSE), now onto its third successful sequel, he declined the offer.

With the exceptions of Fulci's GASTON LEROUX' WAX MASK (which Argento will concentrate on after STENDHAL SYNDROME) and the TV series (now transformed into six two-hour telefilms under the umbrella title DARIO ARGENTO: SEI DELITTI, SEI CITTA [SIX CRIMES, SIX CITIES]), all these ideas stalled or evaporated. From a financial point of view, Argento needed to start a new project desperately. All he was looking for was the inspira-



tion to guide him toward one of his typically outrageous notions. Then, like the psychotic implications of the XYY chromosome configuration in CAT O' NINE TAILS, he suddenly found what he needed in a medical book which revealed a puzzling fact about three hospital beds in Florence always available for anyone suffering from "The Stendhal Syndrome." But what was this illness? Further research into the weird subject amazed Argento and supplied him with the ideal central concept he required for a new horror thriller in the giallo tradition he popularized in the early '70s. Here was an intriguing sickness so bizarre, so strange and peculiar, that no one would believe it, and the name itself would provide the movie's title, as well as attract significant box office curiosity.

**S**tendhal was the pen name of Parisian-born writer Marie Henri Bayle. Born in 1783, he was a celebrated officer in Napoleon's army, and became consul to Italy, before turning novelist and writing such acclaimed works as *Armance* (1827) and *The Charterhouse Farms* (1839). Stendhal's most popular book is *The Scarlet, Red and the Black* (1831), credited with pushing the novel form to new literary boundaries and paving the way for authors such as Charles Dickens to pick up the dense narrative baton. Largely under-appreciated in his lifetime—he died in 1842—Stendhal is also revered for his 1822 psychological analysis *De L'Amour (On Love)*, which predated most of Freud's theories. But aside from all this, he's most famous for something that happened in 1817 while visiting Florence. According to his diaries, he went on a tour of Santa Croce church where a number of inexplicable emotions affected him. First he was touched by the perfect shape of the architectural dome; then he was overwhelmed by a Michelangelo fresco; and finally he fainted clean away when he spied a Giotto painting. Stendhal wrote, "My feeling is so deep that it almost approached pity. All this speaks clearly to my soul. Ah! If only I could forget it all." This state of mental col-

D.P. GIUSEPPE ROTUNNO

**"It's my job to heighten the drama between Anna's normal life and what happens when she is affected by the syndrome. It's all done from her P.O.V., dubbed 'Anna-Vision'."**



While Dario supervises at left, Asia perches on dolly so that the camera can track with her as her character, policewoman Anna Manni, enters a painting.

lapse, which manifests itself physically when an individual is faced by a particularly beautiful or suggestive work of art, has been termed "The Stendhal Syndrome" ever since.

Argento said, "When I further investigated the syndrome, I found out that it not only causes split personalities, self-inflicted injuries, and hallucinations, but it also gives the person affected enormous physical strength and often a wish for death. Stendhal was a great traveller—he wrote numerous travel books—and absolutely adored the poetry of Lord Byron. He was that sort of over-the-top romantic, who, in my opinion, would be more susceptible to being overcome by tremendous beauty. I figured he would be tired—it's exhausting being a tourist—and that may have had a lot to do with his symptomatic giddiness. Yet, there's no denying the syndrome exists, because at least one per-

son a day suffers from it in Florence even now.

"So here was an unusual condition incorporating all manner of characteristics I felt worth discussing in script form," Argento continued. "You look at a painting, and your soul changes. You view a masterpiece, and it's impossible to remain the same person afterwards. You can perceive evil just by gazing at a small detail in the corner which you know the artist agonized for ages over. My overriding excitement concerned the fact that art is meant to raise the spirits, not crush them or take them over. In school we are taught Art can enrich our lives. Stendhal found out that wasn't true. It can also be debilitating. The possibility of Art being deadly really interested me. Violent images in film and on television are supposed to cause violence in viewers. The first 20 minutes of *SUSPIRIA* is often cited as causing

## FILMOGRAPHY

Argento's Giallo Exploits to Date

by Steve Biodrowski

### THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE ★★1/2

After contributing to such scripts as Sergio Leone's *ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST*, Argento made his directing debut with this, his first giallo effort, which he unofficially adapted from Frederic Brown's novel *Screaming Mimi*. In many ways this is the Argento film for audiences who don't like his later work; that is, it's his most conventional mystery-thriller, with its protagonist (Tony Musante) following a trail of clues that leads to the killer's identity. Some exciting set pieces and camera work foreshadow what was to come later, and despite a mild PG rating, the uncut print features some intense moments. All in all, an adequate overture which introduces themes that will be developed more fully in subsequent work.

### CAT O' NINE TAILS ★★

After the success of his first film, Argento managed to alienate critics with this next effort, which upped the violence quotient without really developing an involving plot. Whereas Argento's other works blame their killers' dementia on traumatic psychological experiences, this film uses a biological, science-fiction explanation: a double Y chromosome. (On the other hand, Maitland McDonagh, in her fine book, *Broken Mirrors, Broken Minds*, points out that the killer resorts to murder only *after* finding out about his condition, implying that the mental anguish of this self-knowledge is what drove him to murder). This film introduces the use of a subjective camera to mask the

Mater Tenebrarum reveals herself in the fiery climax of *INFERNO*.







Jessica Harper defends herself against Helena Marcos, Mater Suspiriorum, in *SUSPIRIA*.

killer's identity (in this case preceded by an extreme close-up of his eye); Argento used this technique repeatedly throughout later films.

#### FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET ★★★1/2

Argento gets back on track with this effort, about an innocent rock-n-roll drummer (Michael Brandon) manipulated into thinking he's killed someone. The violence, which seemed to be spinning the narrative out of control in his previous effort, is just as brutal this time, but the overall effort is much more effectively constructed. The film is also notable for its interesting cast of eccentric supporting characters, including "God" (short for Godfrey). Although Argento is noted for his directorial stylings more than his writing, he proves here (as he did to some extent in *BIRD WITH CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*) than he can create memorable and even sympathetic characters; for instance, the death scene of the private investigator is effective not because of any virtuoso camera work, but because we are sorry to see him die.

#### DEEP RED ★★★★★

This is the quantum leap from Argento's early, Mario Bava-influenced giallo thrillers into a brand of horror all his own. Abandoning Ennio Morricone, who had scored Argento's "Animal Trilogy," the director for this first time employed the rock group Goblin to provide an overpoweringly assaultive soundtrack that suited the new high-powered visual dynamics. Baroque and rich in detail, the film is a dizzying feast for the eyes. For the first time, Argento exhibits an almost fetishistic delight in the weapons of violence, and his camera is no longer bound by the dictates of narrative. It's not enough that he make a point clear, especially if it's the point of a knife; instead, he dwells not only on the violence but on the results in a lurid way that makes watching the film akin to being in a state of delirium.

#### SUSPIRIA ★★★★★

The Argento film, for most North American horror audiences, this effort takes the visual extravagance of *DEEP RED* and magnifies it to an even greater degree, casting aside the psycho-thriller trappings in favor of an adult faery tale. (If you think the opening murder set-piece is overdone now, wait till you see the uncut version on Japanese laserdisc!) Having distilled the story down to almost nothing, Argento has to carry the whole film on style, and he almost succeeds. As entertaining as this is, it is also uneven, with spectacular highs separated by disappointing lows.

#### INFERNO ★★★★★1/2

Having introduced the witch Helena Marcos (a.k.a. "the Mother of Sighs") in *SUSPIRIA*, Argento followed up with "the Mother of Darkness" in this film. (The two figures were introduced in a hallucinogenic essay by Thomas De Quincey; a third, the Mother of Tears, was supposed to be the center of a third film, which never materialized.) This is an amazingly quiet effort for Argento, substituting a moody Keith Emerson score for Goblin's more pulverizing approach. Although no single set-piece ever reaches the intensity of *SUSPIRIA*'s opener, this is a much smoother work overall; like *ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST*, it effectively segues from set-piece to set-piece, whether or not much plot connects the individual scenes. Perhaps the film's most effective quality is that it's so damned cryptic! Using alchemy as his metaphor (an esoteric precursor to science meant only to be understood by its practitioners), Argento unfolds this tale, full of implied significances which are never explained. The audience is left, like the film's hero, feeling as if exposed to a dark mystery with no solution—or perhaps a solution beyond human explanation. As Argento said at a recent American Cinematheque retrospective, "When I read about alchemy, I kept asking 'Why?' But there is no why!"

In *TENEBRAE*'s powerful closing shot, Daria Nicolodi screams as the image fades, extending her terror beyond the film and into the audience's memory.



In *DEEP RED*, Argento dwells on the details to horrifying effect.

Alchemy is all about process—that is, the journey, not the goal. That's what *INFERNO* is: a dark journey.

#### TENEBRAE ★★★★★

*INFERNO* never got the wide release it deserved from 20th Century Fox (who had made a ton of money on *SUSPIRIA*, under a subsidiary label). Consequently, Argento abandoned the "Three Mothers Trilogy" and returned to the giallo format with this, probably his greatest film. This is also probably the greatest horror film ever made with the lights on, so to speak; a perfect companion piece to *DEEP RED*, *TENEBRAE* abandons the historical architecture of the earlier film for a bright-lit, modernistic approach (although both films are set in Rome, *TENEBRAE* has not a single shot of a historical monument). A relatively strong—and, at first, deceptively traditional—plot bends, twists, and ultimately breaks, undermining audience expectations in a disarmingly disturbing way. The imagery is justifiably renowned; at times, it's almost insane in its

brilliance, as when the police inspector bends down to pick up a piece of evidence and the killer is revealed standing directly behind him—where he could not possibly be, in any logical scheme of things. (The nightmarish effectiveness of this shot was copied by Brian DePalma, to less effect, for the end of *RAISING CAIN*.)

#### PHENOMENON ★★

Argento began to go erratic with this weak effort, recut and retitled *CREEPERS* for U.S. consumption. This film has its moments, but in many ways it's a regressive and misguided return to the director's earlier efforts. He seemed to be trying to work in a more conventional mode, toning down the camera pyrotechnics and concentrating on the story. Unfortunately, the story isn't very interesting and, at times, is downright ridiculous. Argento also uses pre-existing heavy metal songs for the first time to punch up the soundtrack, but they don't work as effectively as Goblin's music. The uncut version of this is still not great or even very good, but it is better.

#### OPERA ★★★★★1/2

An amazing comeback, this in a sense forms a trilogy with *DEEP RED* and *TENEBRAE* as Argento's most effective psycho-horror movies. The visual extravagance of the former is on display, and the thematic concerns of the later are further developed. More heavy metal is on the soundtrack, this time effectively contrasted with classical music befitting the film's setting. The end is a slight letdown: for the first time since *BIRD WITH CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, Argento merely has his murderer apprehended, without a spectacularly gory demise. Also, the heroine delivers a somewhat saccharine voice-over soliloquy, meant to make some kind of uplifting sense out of all



the horror; this has been understandably removed from theatrical prints (should you be so lucky to see the film in a theater). Still, whatever the narration may try to tell us, the effectiveness of Argento's imagery lingers in the mind as disturbingly as that of DEEP RED and TENEBRAE.

#### TWO EVIL EYES ★★1/2

As a change of pace, Argento wrote and directed "The Black Cat," the second of this two-part anthology adapted from Edgar Allan Poe. (George Romero did the first episode, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.") The critical consensus is that Argento's is the superior episode, but what hasn't been made clear is that it is also fairly faithful to the spirit of Poe's story. Argento effectively shows a character (played by Harvey Keitel), who, as in the short story, deliberately allows himself to sink into a moral quagmire which eventually envelopes him—while all the while claiming that this "spirit of perverseness" is an uncontrollable, innate faculty driving him against his will. For the only time in his career, Argento abandons the mystery format, giving us a first-person perspective on his killer. The results are refreshingly different, but the effort is less rich than his best work in Italy (this was his first American production; like TRAUMA, it suffers from his attempt to Americanize himself—i.e., tone down to R-rated levels). Also, the fact that there were only two episodes dictated that each run fifty minutes, for a combined feature-length running time. Thirty-five or at most forty would have sufficed.

#### TRAUMA ★★

This was such a disappointment that it is universally loathed by Argento fans. Those who bother to watch it a second time (if they can be persuaded) will see that it is not the disaster it is perceived to be. It's still no match for his best work, but it is a watchable effort that simply suffers from Argento's attempt to mainstream himself for greater accessibility—a misguided effort, to be sure. Dialogue scenes play out in standard camera coverage—master-shot, two-shot, and close-up—which would not be out of place in a TV movie. The problem is that neither the writing nor the performances are strong enough to justify this kind of restrained technique, which places emphasis on audience identification with the characters. Argento's best horror has usually not been based on this approach; rather, it's been aimed directly at the audience. Also, some important early footage is missing from release prints, which would have made the characters' actions more understandable. The best you can say for this film is that it is clearly a miscalculation, not (as CREEPERS seemed to be) a sign of atrophying talent. □

#### DIRECTOR DARIO ARGENTO

**"You view a masterpiece, and you can perceive evil, just by gazing at a detail. We are taught art can enrich our lives. Stendhal found out that wasn't true. It can also be debilitating."**



Dr. Cavanna (Paolo Bonacelli) bones up on the Stendhal Syndrome, a mental breakdown which affects people overpowered by great works of art.

people to faint, yet this is art, too. These are the questions I raise in THE STENDHAL SYNDROME."

With his imagination suitably fired, Argento wrote a treatment containing a basic outline of what happens when a girl from Chicago visits a Phoenix art gallery where she is so overcome by the beauty of a Bosch painting that it strangely changes her metabolism. "I loved working with my daughter Asia in TRAUMA, and I wrote THE STENDHAL SYNDROME with her in mind," said Argento. "Since then, she has really matured as an actress and won awards for her performances. Not only was Asia my model for the central character of Anna, I also knew she could play the complex role." Enter actress Bridget Fonda, daughter of EASY RIDER icon Peter Fonda and star of IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU and LITTLE BUDDHA. A huge horror movie buff (she had a cameo in Sam Raimi's ARMY OF DARKNESS) and a great fan of

Argento's work, Fonda was originally cast in TRAUMA as TV news anchor Grace Harrington, but conflicting schedules meant she had to bow out.

Argento had discussed THE STENDHAL SYNDROME with Fonda, who professed interest in the leading role. With a star of Fonda's calibre attached, financing the project wouldn't be an issue, and Argento would finally have a foot on the bottom rung of the Hollywood ladder. Quite what happened next is veiled in silence on Argento's part, although Fonda's alleged no-haggle \$1.5 million fee is cited by associates as the main stumbling block. Jennifer Jason Leigh was apparently considered as a replacement, but ultimately Argento did what he knew he should have done all along: he fine-tuned the script, offered the lead role to Asia, and secured the entire \$6 million budget from Medusa, the newly minted theatrical distribution arm of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest TV empire. (Previously, Berlusconi co-

owned Fenta distribution with Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori, which released THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER and TRAUMA). Produced by former Cannon associate Beppe Colombo, THE STENDHAL SYNDROME began eight weeks of principal photography on July 17, 1995, at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Starring alongside Asia Argento are Thomas Kretschmann, Marco Leonardi (LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE), and Paolo Bonacelli (SALO).

"I read an early draft when my father intended shooting it in America," said Asia. "It was okay, but when you write I think it's important you have someone to argue with, and that was what was continually happening over the American version. It greatly helped improve the finished article in this instance because, as a result of all the bitter compromises, Dario honed the script to perfection, whether he proposed to or not."

The major differences between the original treatment and the finished script are mainly the switched locations, the record quota of sexual violence (even by Argento's standards), and the inclusion of more than a few passing nods to THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. Asia plays Roman policewoman Anna Manni on assignment in Florence to exchange some information with the law authorities regarding a serial killer who tortures, rapes, and murders his female victims, blowing their heads off with a shotgun at the point of his sexual orgasm. Unusual for an Argento plot, the identity of the maniac is revealed early. His name is Alfredo Grossi; and, although he's eluded capture, he loves the thrill of the chase and decides Anna will be his Angel of Mercy, the one he will let get closer than anyone before.

He chooses Anna primarily because of her suffering from "The Stendhal Syndrome," something he witnessed while secretly following her into the Uffizi Gallery's Sala di Cosimi, where she fainted in front of Bruegel's painting "The Fall of Icarus." It is Alfredo's intention to sublimate the syndrome by engineering Anna's illness, give her clues to his identity while she's under the disturbing and





Dario directs the opening scene in the Uffizi Gallery: overcome by the art around her Anna (Asia Argento) faints and hits her mouth (inset).



morbid influence of great art like Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" and Carravaggio's "The Card Players," and then see if she can sift out his raw reality from her clinical surreality. After leaving a message in the mutilated vagina of one victim, Alfredo gets impatient, kidnaps Anna, and holds her prisoner in his graffiti-covered hideout. But he underestimates Anna's strength, and in a long, drawn-out struggle, she kills him and throws his body over the famous Cascata della Marmore waterfall.

However, as Anna tries to cope with the effects of mental instability brought on by syndrome stress, and takes to covering her facial scars with a blonde Veronica Lake wig, the murders continue and get even more vicious. Could Alfredo still be alive? Is Anna's boyfriend Marco (Leonardi) as innocent as he looks? What about her new-found friend Marie (Julien Lambroschini, named after Stendhal's real alter-ego)? And what parts do her father (John

Quentin) and her psychiatrist Dr. Cavanna (Bonacelli) play in the unfolding conundrum? In a blood-soaked, frenzied climax, the shocking truth is revealed. (Asia's character is named in tribute to her half-sister Anna, actress Daria Nicolodi's daughter from a pre-Dario relationship, who died in a 1994 car accident.)

**W**ith brain-searing tortures and murders, including a broken fingernail thrust into an eyeball, a car hood decapitation, numerous razor blade (ab)uses, and snapped spinal cords, *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* is "the most brutal movie I've ever made," according to Argento. "The criminal mind is getting

sicker these days and so I'm reflecting that reality. I've decided not to worry about censorship here. I'm putting my pure vision on the screen for a change, without any compromises. It's my intention to try and engender the same accumulation of weird sensations and unsettling emotions in the audience that Anna is feeling. How can I do that without going to visually shocking extremes? My concern is for the Italian audience first. The rest of the world can do what it wants."

Packed with the type of trademark technical images for which Argento is justifiably famous (e.g., *TENEBRAE*'s over-the-roof shot, *OPERA*'s swirling raven descent), *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* never lets the camera stop moving. It turns 360 degrees over Anna's horrified face and then plunges into her mouth, tails an exploding bullet as it travels through a victim's cheeks, and follows two pills down Anna's throat and into her stomach where they dissolve. The latter effect was one Argento originally planned for *CREEPERS*, but technology wasn't up to speed at that time. Helping Argento give *STENDHAL SYNDROME* its distinctive look is director of photography Rotunno. Surprisingly, it's the first giallo-style picture the highly regarded cinematographer has ever lit in an incredible career studded with such highlights as Luchino Visconti's

*THE LEOPARD*, Stanley Kramer's *ON THE BEACH*, Fellini's *SATYRICON*, *AMACCORD* and *CASANOVA*, Mike Nichols' *CARNAL KNOWLEDGE*, and the recent *SABRINA* remake.

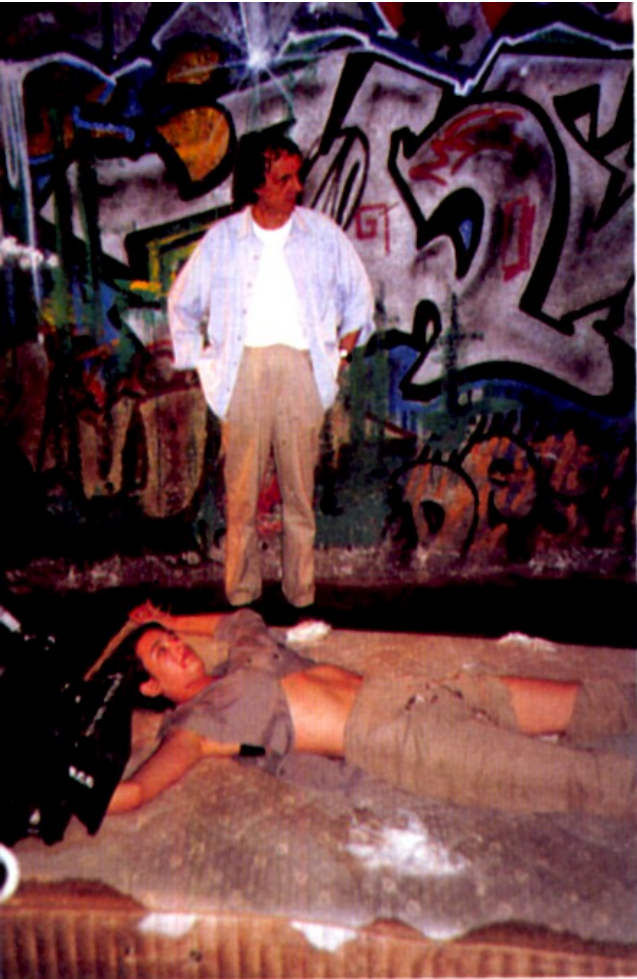
Rotunno said, "I had the choice between another American movie and Dario's film. I chose his because I hadn't worked in Italy for years and I was getting homesick. I have a great respect for Dario's work and was interested to see what I could bring to it. Basically, I don't light images; I light a director's feelings. I like to go inside them and see what I can draw out that's uniquely personal to them. I never like to repeat my atmospheres, and on *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* the challenges have been an enormous thrill."

What Rotunno had to achieve fell into two main categories. "Photography must service the story and never be obtrusive, so it's my job to heighten the drama between Anna's normal everyday life and what happens when she is affected by the syndrome," he explained. "We've dubbed the letter 'AnnaVision.' It's all done from Anna's point of view, with dark and light contrasts picking out silver-lining style details in dim spaces. What I haven't tried to do is recreate the look of the paintings she falls into and becomes a part of. There's no such Great Master imitation like

After hitting her mouth during the faint, Anna, still in a daze, is taken by madman Alfonso Grossi to his place, where they meet for the first time.







Dario and Asia on the Graffiti room set, where Anna is held captive and tormented by the psychotic Grossi.

Stanley Kubrick did in BARRY LYNDON. 'AnnaVision' is very complex light arrangement as it must take in candle-light as well as shadows. The 'Graffiti Room' set we're shooting on at the moment is a nightmare to light because of its angular shape and the important minutiae they must register subconsciously before Dario lets the images fly."

The "Graffiti Room" took five local graffiti artists two days to paint under the guidance of production designer Antonella Gelang (THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER), who stenciled the key images Argento needed and then gave the boys free license to fill in the rest. The paint fumes were so strong in the confined space that two of the artists were taken for hospital treatment after being overcome by fumes. But the atmosphere had sufficiently cleared by the time the two lead actors arrived for what would turn out to be an emotionally taxing and uncomfortable shooting experience. Luckily, Asia Argento and Thomas Kretschmann were more than relaxed with each other during these murky torture-hallucination scenes, having acted together before: she played Charlotte of Saue and he played Nancay, in Patrice Chereau's blood-spattered historical epic QUEEN MARGOT.

Although most of Kretschmann's scenes ended up on the cutting room floor in that prestigious production, he and Asia

# STENDHAL SYNDROME

## SERGIO STIVALETTI

*Supplementing gore with CGI surrealism.*

**T**HE STENDHAL SYNDROME is unique in the annals of the Italian film industry, for it is the first production to utilize extensive computer graphic visual effects. Special visual effects supervisor Sergio Stivaletti is quick to point out that, although the London-based Cinesite company is being used as image transfer middleman, Stivaletti is programming every image himself at his Via Cola Di Fienzo base in Rome.

Stivaletti's role is quite a switch from his responsibilities on past Argento productions, including PHENOMENON/CREEPERS, DEMONS, OPERA, THE CHURCH, and THE SECT/THE

DEVIL'S DAUGHTER. Nevertheless, he is happy to pass the blood and gore chores to makeup artist Franco Casagni, who designed the razor blade slashings, the gun deaths, and the latex neck piece for Thomas Kretschmann's bed spring demise. Stivaletti said, "I've been there and done it all. Franco is welcome to it. I've been interested in CGI technology for many years now, and I've travelled all over the world to learn how to do it. It's surprisingly easy once you grasp the fact it's the same as painting or sculpting except it's done on a TV screen. It's just a clay tool like everything else. There are no facilities in Italy yet to really handle such effects, so I'm the pioneer.



I've already supplied a few CGI effects for Lamberto Bava's TV fairy tales like the FANTAGHIRO series, but they don't have to be so perfect for the small screen. Dealing with large-scale movie images is a different and daunting task, and THE STENDHAL SYNDROME will be ground-breaking in Italy because of it."

There are five major sequences

Left: Dario lines up the devil suit, which—when enhanced with CGI—will appear to emerge from the wall's graffiti. Inset: effects supervisor Sergio Stivaletti inspects the breathing hose for the suit. Right: Miacha Koopman dons the suit.







Actress Sonia Topazio poses next to Stivaletti's mock-up of her head, for the CGI bullet shot. Right: Franco Casagni handled the gore chores on set, as Stivaletti was more interested in developing the computer effects.

in *STENDHAL SYNDROME* that are Stivaletti's responsibility, and three of those involve bringing oil paintings to life. In the course of the story, policewoman Anna Manni, (Asia Argento) is physically affected by three works of art. The first is Breugel's "The Fall of Icarus," which she views during the opening segment in Florence's Uffizi Gallery. Stivaletti said, "Basically, we have to depict Asia tumbling into the two-dimensional painting, which suddenly becomes three dimensional as she takes the place of Icarus and falls out of the sky into the sea where she meets a weird fish. Although Dario originally wanted just a straight dissolve (he's never been keen on optical work, because he thinks it's too evident to the audiences), I suggested something more spectacular along the lines of parts of the painting gradually becoming real like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle—something a little unusual with texture. We filmed Asia swimming in a pool and will key those blue-screen images into our sea program. We've also built a mechanical fish and will place a slightly surreal human face onto it."

The second painting to which Anna adversely responds is a print of Rembrandt's "The Night Watch," hanging on the wall of a hotel room where she is recuperating from her initial bout of Stendhal Syndrome. In this instance, Anna becomes part of the gloomy street scene as it dissolves from the Dutch past into the Roman present, and she witnesses the discovery of Alfredo's latest victim in a back al-

ley by her colleagues on the force. Stivaletti added, "This is very straightforward. There is no copyright on famous paintings; they are in the public domain. But we had to work from pristine copies of the originals if the illusions were to work. Unfortunately, the slides museums provide are very poor, and we had to do a lot of work just to get them up to Kodak quality."

The third painting to cause severe hallucinations for Anna, as she is staring at the notice board in a police station waiting room, is an original one supplied by production designer Antonello Geleng. Stivaletti said, "We needed a painting to represent a real place in the story. The location chosen was Villa Doria Pamphilli, a Roman park featuring an unused waterfall which could be turned off and on. Here we will make the water move first before reanimating anything else. I keep having fights with Dario over exactly how much digital footage we intend to create, as it is expensive. But I think we both like to work this way because we enjoy arguing."

In *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*, Argento utilized a high-speed camera for a disorienting shock moment when a bullet entered actor Michael Brandon's arm in slow-motion. He returned to this idea for a similar shot in *OPERA*, wherein a bullet is fired into a door peephole and through actress Daria Nicolodi's head. A giant prop bullet and special makeup effects created this effective sequence, also shown in slow mo-

tion. For *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*, the director moves the concept into its third incarnation, with CGI. Stivaletti explained, "Alfredo kills his victims by shooting them in the head. To add impact to one murder in particular, Dario wanted to see the bullet go into one cheek and then—from inside the mouth—track it past the camera lens and out through the other cheek. With digital compositing and live-action footage, this is very easy to achieve. We had to build a fake head to shoot on set because of the conjunction between CGI and reality, but the effect is not for gore's sake, only to perfect what Dario has always seen as a beautiful image."

But the most complex effect Stivaletti must create had its origins on the "Graffiti Room" set. It's for the psychedelic moment when Anna surveys the graphics sprayed in broad strokes on the wall of Alfredo's lair and her shattered psyche brings an obscene devil to menacing life. Stivaletti said, "This was a nightmare in both senses. Dario wanted the Devil as a primitive graphic, not like the ones in *DEMONS*, and it was hard to bring to life something so naive. At first, he didn't like any concept I came up with, so in despair I just drew a crude asymmetrical sketch, and that was exactly what he wanted. This was painted onto the 'Graffiti Room' wall for the establishing shots. We then built a full-size latex suit and had to cross-morph between the picture and the Devil advancing, penis first, into the camera. There is no PG version of the giant phallus suit! We filled in the wall painting with a nailed-on black paper outline, put my assistant Michela Koopman in the suit, and

stood him against the wall in exactly the same position waiting for Dario to call 'Action.' In post-production, we'll blur the painting with the suit scenes so the Devil does look like it's pulled itself off the wall." Filming these scenes caused much locker-room hilarity among the crew, especially when first assistant Luigi Cozzi dubbed Stivaletti's surprisingly effective suit "Cazilla," a combination of the Italian slang for penis—Cazzo—and Godzilla.

Sergio Stivaletti only had two weeks of pre-production before the start of *STENDHAL SYNDROME*, but that minimal period is par for the course when he tackles an Argento project. He worked on neither *TWO EVIL EYES* nor *TRAUMA* (Tom Savini handled both), but he joins in the collective sigh of relief now that Argento is back home in Rome. He said, "Dario is the only director who can make this type of film. I'm glad he realized that for the atmosphere he desires there's really nowhere else better. From the Art point of view, it was important to shoot in Florence. I never could see Phoenix as an acceptable substitute. It's far more natural for him to be in Rome."

Although he initially resisted Stivaletti's idea of using CGI technology, Argento finally saw the sense of it. The director said, "Surrealism used to be hard to put on film. Not anymore. Computer graphics can allow me to depict my extreme dreams and dark fantasies. Exploding heads, slicing up bodies—it's all easy to show today. It's hard to come to terms with the thought that you're only limited by your imagination when it comes to what you can visually achieve now." **Alan Jones**





Dario directs Anna's dispatching of Grossi, but the film doesn't end there. Anna, with a wig hiding scars, receives mysterious calls, and the murders continue.

bonded for four months while shooting in Paris. Consequently, when the part of Alfredo was proving difficult to cast, Asia told her father to take a look at Kretschmann's work, in particular his lead role in Joseph Vilsmaier's gritty German war movie *STALINGRAD* (1992). Argento liked what he saw and immediately cast the 33-year-old actor in the role of the "psychotic alien which society has chosen to burn out of existence" as Kretschmann is fond of describing Alfredo.

Kretschmann was an East German Championship swimmer in the '70s after training for the sport from the age of 17. By escaping over the Berlin Wall in 1983, he defected to the West, where his Aryan good looks and muscular physique instantly attracted casting agent attention. Although a major film and television star in Germany, he is virtually unknown outside that country—something he hopes will change after audiences see his extreme performance as Grossi. Kretschmann said, "I loved Alfredo the moment I read the script. But I knew if I did it, I wouldn't be able to hold back. It would be like playing a Nazi. What would I do? Go for it wholesome or try and put an element of humanity in his sadism? I'm playing Alfredo with no redeeming features, without consequences, and as awful as possible. I personally don't think serial killing is a particularly good career choice, but my character has picked it

as his profession, and I'm playing it to the hilt! I don't want to fake it. It has to be real, and that's the hardest challenge of all with Alfredo. I have to convince the audience he's deranged but not stupid."

"In my opinion, *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* is a combination of *BLADE RUNNER*, *THE BAD LIEUTENANT* and *APOCALYPSE NOW*," the actor continued. "I look at Alfredo in similar terms to the replicant Rutger Hauer played in *BLADE RUNNER*—a spaced-out alien from another dimension. Alfredo is very intellectual and intelligent but far too big a personality for our existence. Dario even lightened my hair to make it more blonde, to give me an otherworldly look. The only research I did into my character was read Brett

Easton Ellis' book *American Psycho*. I figured that would give me all the pointers I needed. I'm not making any excuses for Alfredo; I'm merely playing him as written. Is Dario being gratuitous and voyeuristic in the sexual violence scenes? Not in my estimation. Sure, what Alfredo does is distasteful and sickening. But don't you have to show how disgusting his actions are to make the point?"

Kretschmann certainly feels that way and has put in hours of practice to make the more brutish sequences ring with a vicious verisimilitude. He remarked, "I spent two days with a real razor blade in my mouth, rolling it around with my tongue and wedging it between my teeth. It's exciting to get technically perfect over such shit. However, despite our using

their product in unusual ways, I doubt whether Gillette will be endorsing this film! Dario was impressed with what I could do with the blade and has added more shots as a result. He's nuts—but in a crazy, childish way. I've had a lot of fun with Dario, working on character improvisation. Some things he's liked: at one point, I think I'm Jesus and strike a crucifixion pose in the moonlight after one attack. Dario sees that religious aspect as another symptom of Alfredo's sickness. He wasn't keen on the gun blow-job at first, but I've won him round. Dario has let me use my fantasies as an actor, and that's important. He's given me so much more room to move."

What Kretschmann didn't deem important was to see Argento's past movies as reference. "I knew Dario was Italy's 'Signor Horror,' and I watched *DEEP RED* once I got the role. But that was more than I wanted to see. I needed to come into the Argento universe fresh and un-intimidated by his reputation." Nor did he spend much time learning about the title ailment. "I knew nothing and still don't. Technically, the syndrome is unimportant to me. Alfredo is a user, and he simply uses this bizarre illness to trap Anna in his web after checking her out. He's bored with society and trying to find someone as strong as he is to snare him. He has a fatal desire to get caught, and knows it will happen, but when it does he wants to go out with a chal-

Increasingly affected by the Stendhal Syndrome, Anna creates her own works of art by covering herself in paint and rolling around nude on canvases.





lenging fight. That's what he thinks he'll get from Anna, and, of course, he's proved terminally correct. When you've pushed every taboo experience beyond their limits, what's left? However, secretly Alfredo knows there's a limit. And he so desperately wants to find it. Anna is the key to his warped redemption."

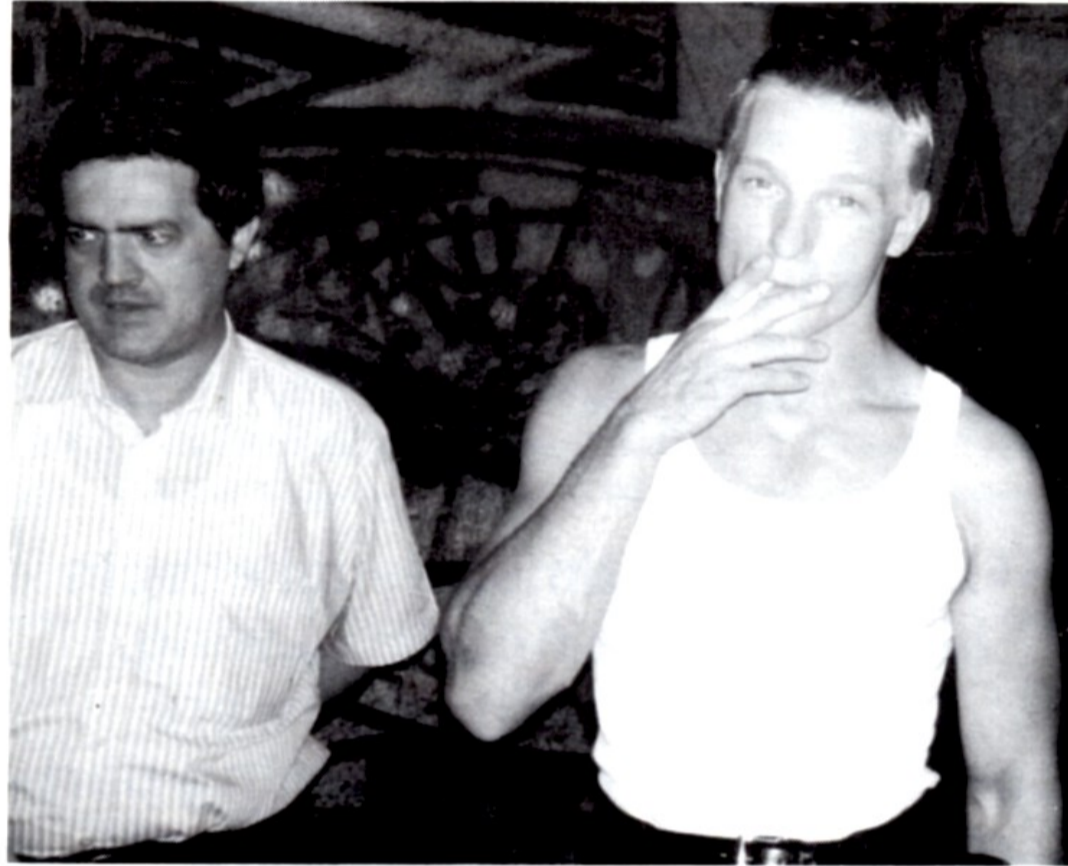
Watching Kretschmann practice how far he can push the barrel of his prop gun down into his throat, Asia commented, "You know, Thomas scares me—not in our scenes together, that's acting—but in the way he's personally adapted to the role. I'm not sure how many actors could be as professionally insane as him. I knew he'd be perfect for Alfredo, and I'm right." There isn't much Asia is wrong about these days concerning her own career either, as she is currently one of Europe's hottest stars. Since her debut in Lamberto Bava's *DEMONS 2*, produced by her father, Asia has appeared in one critically acclaimed hit after another, winning a David di Donatello award (Italy's Oscar) for Best Actress for her moving portrayal as a paraplegic in Carlo Verdone's comedy drama *FERDINAMOCI DI VISTA*.

Prior to *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*, "the Italian Winona Ryder" (as she is now dubbed on her home turf) starred in Peter Dal Monte's *COMPAGNO DI VIAGGIO* (*TRAVELLING COMPANION*). "But I couldn't wait to work with my father again because he's a true artist. I turned down more lucrative offers to play Anna, because it's a life experience to work with a master director. When he's also your father, you simply can't say no. We are really creating something together for he can draw a performance out of me in a way no one else can."

Asia was particularly drawn to the role, when she first read it two years ago, because of the acting challenges it presented. She explained, "Firstly, I've never played a policewoman before, someone that sure of herself. And, by the way, I'm not too young for the role because in Italy you are given a great deal of power at 18 when you're fresh out of police train-

A. D. LUIGI COZZI

**"I've never seen Dario happier, surrounded by people who love and admire him. The reason his experiences in America were so miserable is no one knew him. In Italy, Dario is God."**



Argento protege and long-time associate Luigi Cozzi, seen here with Kretschmann, serves as assistant director on *STENDHAL SYNDROME*.

ing. Secondly, because the syndrome affects Anna in two ways. Initially, she becomes very masculine; and then, after she's killed Alfredo, she dons a blonde wig to cover up her facial scar and turns very girly. Those two separate personalities have been fun to do. The rape and torture sequences have been tough, but because Dario has shot it in choreographed tight close-up, it's more an impression of sexual violence than a graphic detailed description. Rape is never acceptable, but Dario has dealt with the subject in an acceptable way. Otherwise, I wouldn't do it!"

In common with everyone else working on the picture, Asia had never heard of Stendhal's Syndrome until her father mentioned it was the focal point of his new script. "I couldn't believe it was a true sickness at first, but I did meet a sufferer and also asked a psychoanalyst what it was supposed to feel like. Both said it was an unsafe, lost feeling that sublimated itself as an uncontrollable trembling. In the movie, I fall into the paintings themselves and be-

come a part of the scenery, but that's a rare symptom. I'm also trying to show Anna's ego being crushed by visualizing that little fragment of herself she has no control over. It's a difficult part because I'm trying to act out an illness nobody has any real comprehension about. If there's any movie I've taken notes from it's Abel Ferrara's *MS. 45* and actress Zoe Tamerlis' mute shock confusion."

Asia has had a personal impact on two areas of *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* production. The allegorical canvases her character paints are all her own work—"I covered myself in paint naked and rolled over the canvases on the floor"—and her favorite exercise sport was incorporated into the script. She remarked, "Originally Anna was a Kung-fu black belt, but I asked Dario to change it to boxing. I'm a good boxer myself. I took up the sport because a fan punched me on the street one day and I swore no one would ever do it again and get away with it. I know it's a masculine pursuit, but when I was looking to keep

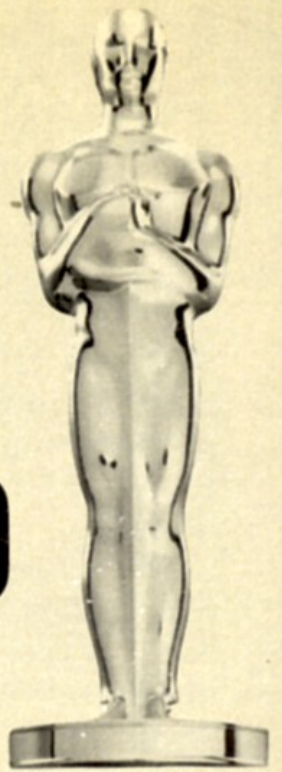
myself fit I thought stuff like aerobics and jogging were stupid. I really show off in the movie, too. I have this *TERMINATOR* look, and I can take on any man and kick his ass. I've since realized I was always this violent, repressed person. Boxing has been great therapy, and I'm not so frightened of the world as I used to be."

**D**ario Argento, however, is hoping the world will be as frightened by *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* as it used to be by his classic work. Even by his headline-making standards, the prospect of a new Argento thriller has been greeted by the Italian media with a frenzied reverence usually reserved for the Pope. Not a day passed without newspaper or television coverage of the production from every possible angle. Even trivial facts (like the second assistant director being the son of the game show presenter on the Italian *WHEEL OF FORTUNE*) garnered unprecedented attention. Argento stated, "I have never been more prepared for a picture than I have been on this one. I've been planning it for over three years and have thought about every single frame in minute detail. For one of the few times, I actually do feel like Alfred Hitchcock, as he shot every film in his mind before principal photography began, and I've done the same here. When I first mentioned this movie to distributors and friends, many of them said, 'Is it a perfume?' I laughed so much. At least I can say my central maniac has less in common with the modern horror genre, which always views the villain as a symbol of anger and social rebellion, than I'd ever dreamed possible. It's a good moment if you have something different to say, something new, something strange. Audiences are ready for *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*. I can feel it." Although not the perfume his associates assumed he was marketing, perhaps this latest flight of fantasy will finally bring Argento the sweet smell of success that has proved so elusive of late. □





# WHAT EARNS F/X RESPECT?



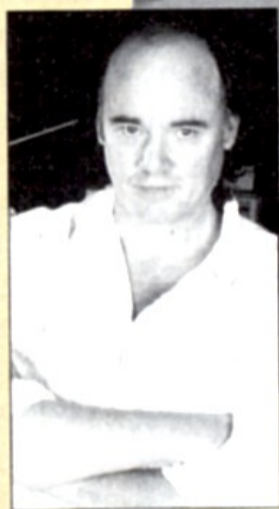
**Oscar's relationship has solidified with a special branch devoted to visual effects.**

*By Michael Lyons*

It was one of Siskel and Ebert's greatest arguments. A third of the way into last year's Academy Awards special, *IF WE PICKED THE WINNERS*, the two celebrity film critics erupted into verbal jabs when they disagreed on their picks for Best Visual Effects. After announcing *FORREST GUMP* as his choice, Gene Siskel was almost appalled to see that Roger Ebert favored *TRUE LIES*. The two then went on to debate the issue, almost eating into the time allotted for Best Picture.

The fact that the category made it onto the influential critics' show at all is proof of just how much recognition this oft-slighted area of filmmaking is finally earning from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In February of last year, the Academy initiated a special branch specifically for visual effects. John Erland, chair of the steering group from the Academy's Visual Effects Committee, explained, "When an art or a craft in the industry achieves a level of significance to the overall industry, the Academy recognizes that and establishes a branch for that—as, for example, a branch for sound. Certainly, the last 20 years or so have es-

**"For the first time, visual effects is a bona fide Academy wing. A lot of the techniques are spreading out and becoming part of conventional filmmaking."**



Above: *JURASSIC PARK* is one of several recent films that used CGI to earn respect and Oscar recognition for Visual Effects. Left: winner Phil Tippett.

established that visual effects is a significant facet of the motion picture industry."

Phil Tippett, a visual effects supervisor, added, "For the first time, visual effects is a bona fide wing of the Academy. So, certainly a lot of the techniques are spreading out and becoming part of the lexicon of conventional filmmaking techniques. The more it spreads out, the more the val-

ue of it spreads over filmmaking"

Tim Landry, a visual effects supervisor with Dream Quest Images, agrees that the new branch of the Academy will most likely "bump up" effects in terms of respect. "I hope that there's more recognition of the hard work and artistry that goes into the visual effects branch," said Landry. "Always, we're listed way down

at the bottom of the credits, below the caterer, below the transportation, even though we may put in as much time and man hours and sweat and blood, and sometimes more, than many of the live-action production personnel."

The Academy Awards have had an "on again, off again" relationship with visual effects that began in 1939, when a film entitled *THE RAINS CAME*, beat out such nominees as *GONE WITH THE WIND* and *THE WIZARD OF OZ* to win the Special Effects Oscar. This was the first year that the category had been given a name; previously, "Special Awards" or "Scientific and Technical" awards were given out for these achievements. Some years, such as 1940, saw as many as 14 nominees up for Best Special Effects, whereas others had as few as one or two films competing in the category.

In 1963, the Academy decided to differentiate between the different types of F/X, dividing them into two categories, Visual Effects and Sound Effects. In 1972, Special Visual Effects became a sort of "removable category" that did not have to be honored each year. Oscars for effects were presented as Special Achievement Awards. In 1977, it was a regular category once again, re-titled Best Visual Effects, and in the ensuing years, effects would flip-flop between regular competition and





In many ways still the all-time special effects champ, Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968) is an Oscar-winner to which few could object.

"Special" award status, until 1984 when it was back in regular competition and has been since.

Through the years, there have been some very popular and prestigious winners, such as *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* (1940), *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* (1954), *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (1968), all of the *STAR WARS* films, *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT* (1988), *JURASSIC PARK* (1993), and last year's winner, *FORREST GUMP*. There have also been some glaring mistakes and omissions: both *LOGAN'S RUN* and *KING KONG* received undeserved awards in 1977, yet the following year *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* was neglected in favor of *STAR WARS*; the superior *ALTERED STATES* and *BLADE RUNNER* failed to upset popular favorites *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* and *E.T.* in 1980 and 1982, respectively; and the original *KING KONG* (1933), *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* (1963), *TRON* (1982), *THE LAST STARFIGHTER* (1984), and 1994's *THE CROW* are just a few of the many FX-laden films that weren't even nominated.

With only three nominees each year and so many films utilizing effects, why don't the scales balance out? "It's the rules, just to keep the game moving ahead," answered Tip-

pet, who has won Oscars for his work on 1983's *THE RETURN OF THE JEDI* and 1993's *JURASSIC PARK* and has also been on the Academy's nominating committee for nine years. "The whole selection process starts pretty broad," added Tippet, "and then it narrows. It's actually a pretty lengthy and very sincere process."

The process itself works this way: beginning with a list of films that include significant scenes of effects work (which may include as many as 15 to 20 titles), an Academy steering committee discusses each film on the list, in terms of the extent of the effects, the contribution the effects made to the film, as well as the skill and artistry dis-

played; this group is once again voted on, reducing the list to seven, and the consideration process gets even more serious as the new list is passed on to the Academy's nominating committee, who then view fifteen-minute reels from each of the proposed films and listen to presentations from the people who worked on them. From there, the committee votes to nominate the three finalists, who are announced during the early morning telecast, along with all the other nominees.

With such diverse factors as technological sophistication and artistic contribution, what do the voting members of the Academy consider when making their choices. Mike Shea, a visual effects supervisor also

with *Dream Quest*, who has won Oscars for *THE ABYSS* (1989) and *TOTAL RECALL* (1990), said, "I would like to think that these nominees were based on expertise and how well the visual effects for any movie is handled. And, usually it has to do with innovation. If a picture has new and different types of effects, those will be nominated; and to some degree, unfortunately, it's also about how successful a picture is, financially, at the boxoffice."

Phil Tippet echoes this sentiment, pointing out two of 1982's nominees, *BLADE RUNNER* and *E.T.—THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL*. "Both had exceptional work," he said, "and maybe *BLADE RUNNER* a little bit more so. But it was definitely *E.T.*'s year to win the sweepstakes. Particularly for genre films, if there's a big blockbuster—a *STAR WARS*, an *E.T.*—they generally, somehow by default, end up winning the Visual Effects award, if their work is half-way decent."

"This is one of those ongoing discussions that you could argue many facets of," said John Erland. "We certainly do have films that are artistic successes but not necessarily box-office successes and vice versa. Statistically, obviously, the likelihood is that films that win awards also are going to stand a very good chance of being successful with the pub-

*KING KONG* (1933) is one of several landmark effects films not even nominated (The registration board in this publicity photo is not visible in the film itself.)





# WHAT EARNS F/X RESPECT?

## GOING BEYOND FANTASY

*Long a staple of cinefantastique, F/X earn respect for mainstream proliferation.*

Some of the early contenders in last year's visual effects race for Academy Award consideration included INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE, SPEED, THE HUD-SUCKER PROXY and THE LION KING. Wait a minute! THE HUD-SUCKER PROXY? THE LION KING? Yes, even though one was a black comedy and the other was animated, both contained enough visual effects to make it to the first round of Academy consideration.

The two films are also proof that F/X are not just for science fiction any more; they seem to be a part of almost every film. "That's one of the reasons that branch status for effects became a reality," said John Erland, who chairs the Academy's steering committee that selects the nominees for Best Visual Effects. "It's no longer really possible to say that this is no longer a main facet of production."

Visual effects aren't just limited to intergalactic laser blasts; they can be found in stories about simple men (FORREST GUMP), or big-budget action flicks (TRUE LIES), and even sweeping epics (BRAVEHEART). "You can go all the way to Kenneth Branagh's MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, a Shakespearean film," said Erland. "He had visual effects in that. It's possible to make a film without visual effects; but, increasingly, the effects are not effects in their own right but, instead, effects that make it feasible or economical to produce the film."

Erland, who also works with the visual effects company Composite Components, even remembers applying such effects to a sequence (subsequently cut) in the 1994 comedy GREEDY. "We were able to have Kirk Douglas step



Although not perceived as an effects picture, FORREST GUMP used CGI to a great extent, earning an Academy Award at last year's Oscar ceremony.

outside the stage he was shooting on at Universal and shoot a number of scenes against a green backing, so that Paris street scenes and Eiffel Tower scenes and Louvre scenes, could be composited together with him, without him having to leave Universal City."

"More and more pictures have transparent effects," added Mike Shea, a visual effects supervisor with Dream Quest Images. "Movies that you might not consider to be effects pictures have effects in them. Last year's [Oscar] winner was that type of picture. FORREST GUMP applied effects techniques that were both new and unique and traditional, as well. But, they were applied to a picture that you wouldn't consider an effects picture."

Tim Landry, a visual effects supervisor, also with Dream Quest,

says that the cause for effects expansion can be directly related to the expansion of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). "Computers have been slowly, slowly creeping into the process, until they're taking over a good deal of it."

Erland says that such evolving technology will help visual effects do the job they were meant to do, which is help tell a story. "The object of effects," he noted, "is simply to make the process of realizing the writer's and director's visions of the film as transparently as possible. If that vision happens to be a big battle in space, well and good, we have the palette to paint that big battle. If that vision happens to be putting Kirk Douglas on top of the Eiffel Tower, without spending a fortune to take him to Paris to do it, we can do that, also."

**Michael Lyons**

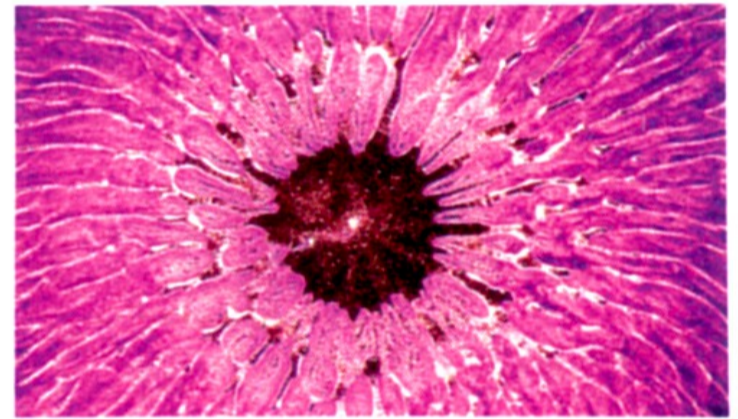
lic. I suppose, in a discussion, you could turn it around and say, 'Well, they selected the film because it was popular,' but I don't know how you would ever determine the cause and effect."

"I know they look for a body of work," said Tim Landry of the selection process. "That is, they'll go for films that have more than one or two shots, even if those two shots are spectacular. They are normal human beings like you and me, and they're going to be impressed by whatever happens to be impressing people at the moment. Just the sheer drama of the scene can often get you very far, but the guys in the visual effects part of the Academy are savvy enough that they know what goes into things, and they realize outstanding work when they see it. When it comes to the choice between fantasy and reality, in any part of the filmmaking process, whether it be costumes, whether it be visual effects, fantasy will almost always win out, because that's very obviously an effect and you can point to it and say, 'Oh, what great effects work.'"

Even this, however, has been changing, thanks to the already well-worn abbreviation, CGI (Computer Generated Imagery). In 1989, THE ABYSS, that year's winner, used CGI to create one of the film's characters, the alien pseudopod. Mike Shea, who worked on the film, doesn't cite it as the industry's "wake-up call" to computer generated effects, but instead cites THE LAST STARFIGHTER. "Not a very successful picture," he said, "but a marvelous picture for its technology, given its time." He also added, "I think what THE ABYSS did was break ground on film-like resolution for computer graphics. It finally said, 'Okay, we can make this stuff work; we've got enough power behind this system now that we can make a short sequence for a picture.'"

Shea also worked on the





**BLADE RUNNER (1982) and ALTERED STATES (1980) are two nominated films with exceptionally extensive and innovative effects that did not win Oscars.**

following year's winner, **TOTAL RECALL**, which in the midst of the growth of CGI, was sort of a "potpourri" of all types of effects, both old and new. "That was an interesting year," noted Shea, "because there weren't very many effects pictures out there. [**TOTAL RECALL**] wasn't really a picture that was ground-breaking. But it was, I think, a large number of shots done well,

and the Academy blessed it with their nomination based on that, not because of its innovation, but because of its progress."

Since then, however, each year has seen a film that showcased CGI: **TERMINATOR 2**, **JURASSIC PARK**, and **FORREST GUMP**. The latter film was also a perfect example of how integral visual effects have become to all films, not

just science fiction and fantasy. Tim Landry said, "I go to the Academy screenings every year, and the past couple of years, it's been pretty interesting. You're sitting there in this room, with all these experts, looking at the various reels from the various productions, and even the effects guys don't know when it's an effects shot, a good chunk of the time."

Despite the fact that visual effects have become a large part of the filmmaking process, they were almost jettisoned from the actual Academy Awards ceremony. Phil Tippet said, "There was a big movement about two years ago to move all the technical type awards over to the technical award ceremony, simply because it didn't make for as fun a show. There were no cool, glitzy people up there."

This has also made the job of accepting the Visual Effects Oscar even more difficult. "It's nerve-racking," admitted Tippet with a laugh. "You have a 'countdown' [a time limit for speeches]; you're told very clearly, particularly those of us in the technical world. We're

not as attractive or eloquent as a lot of other folks, so they want to get us on and off real quick."

Phil remembers that this led to a "group-effort" acceptance speech a few years ago: "When we got the award for **JURASSIC PARK**, the art directors and production designers for **SCHINDLER'S LIST** went up before us, and they struck up the band and gave them the hook before they could even say 'Thank you.' You're supposed to get 15 seconds; they barely got ten, and they 'bombed' them. So we decided all to talk at the same time."

Thankfully, it has finally been recognized that visual effects deserve more "time and space," when it comes not only to the Academy Awards, but to the entire filmmaking process. The new branch of the Academy is proof of this, and many in the visual effects industry wear this proudly. "We're a force to be reckoned with," said Mike Shea, "in that we're not just doing our own little science fiction pictures on the side." □

## F/X CONTENDERS

Seven films are finalists in the visual effects category this year. The effects teams were invited to select four individuals (whose names will appear on the nomination) to make presentations to the Academy on February 7. After that, the visual effects nominating committee had three options: present a special achievement award to a single film; recommend that no award be given; or recommend that 2 or 3 films be nominated. All Academy members vote for the winner, which will be announced at the Awards ceremony on Monday, March 25. The seven finalists are listed below, alphabetically. (A ★ denotes having received a nomination.)

- ★ **APOLLO 13**
- ★ **BABE**
- BATMAN FOREVER**
- CASPER**
- INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD**
- JUMANJI**
- WATERWORLD**





# THE 50 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN SCIENCE FICTION

**CINEFANTASTIQUE** assesses who has the power to make or break the genre.

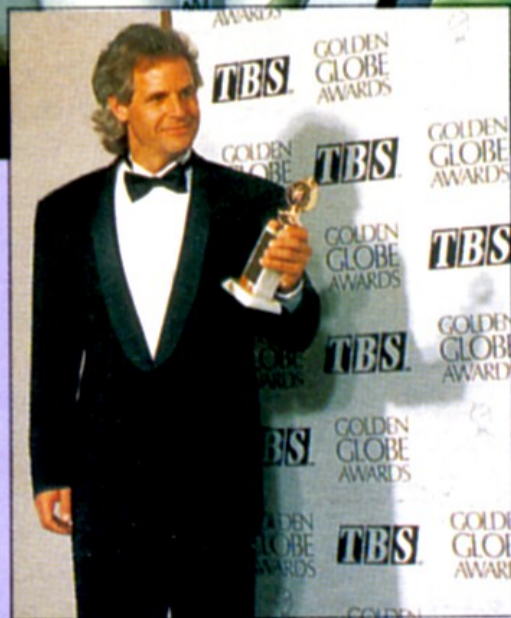
*"Using order to deal with the disorderly, using calm to deal with the clamorous, is mastering the heart."*

—Sun Tzu

By Mark A. Altman  
with additional material  
by Steve Biodrowski

While the philosophy of Sun Tzu may no longer be in vogue after Michael Ovitz bailed from CAA to Disney, power is still something coveted by everyone in Hollywood from the lowliest script reader to the biggest studio mogul. It takes a lot of clout to get a science fiction project greenlighted in Tinseltown, due to the prohibitive expense and a state of the art that's constantly becoming outdated.

In this, the third annual listing of the 50 Most Powerful People in Science Fiction, *Cinefantastique* continues a tradition that began two years ago in the late, unlau-



Top: For the second year in a row, Steven Spielberg tops the 50 Most Powerful List. Up next for him is *THE LOST WORLD*, the much-anticipated sequel to *JURASSIC PARK*. Left: Chris Carter takes the Place Position, thanks to the cult popularity of *THE X-FILES*, soon to be a feature film.

mented *Sci-Fi Channel Magazine* and continued in the late lamented *Imagi-Movies* last year. Now, *CFQ* looks

not only at those who have the power to create, shape, and make a science fiction, fantasy, or horror project in Hollywood, but those who have evinced a consistent desire to work in these fields (there are individuals in Hollywood with far more influence, but who wouldn't get caught dead toiling in what they perceive as a ghetto genre). This year, we broaden our scope a bit to take a look at institutions that wield great clout in the genre; also, acknowledging that great talent does not always guarantee great success, we point out those artists whose high-quality work should land them a position on the list.

These are the people who have a track record in the genre and a continuing interest and ability to make and contribute to imaginative sci-fi in the future. These are the SCI-FI POWER 50.



# 1 STEVEN SPIELBERG

(Last year's ranking: 1)

As a member of the troika running Dreamworks SKG, Spielberg is certainly a Hollywood power player. With his continued interest in making genre projects as well as his impending involvement directing *THE LOST WORLD* and his association with a myriad of other genre projects, including a '90s remake on the tried-but-true formula of a meteor that imperils Earth, Spielberg can make anything he wants...and more often than not make it well.

# 2 CHRIS CARTER

(Last year's ranking: 28)

Chris Carter's *THE X-FILES* has become a true television phenomenon—and that's without ever entering the Nielsen Top 10. Not only is Carter developing a companion sci-fi series for Fox, *MILLENNIUM*, but he's also signed to direct an *X-FILES* feature film. Fox's golden boy is the flavor of the year.

# 3 JAMES CAMERON

(Last year's ranking: 2)

Despite a history of high priced sci-fi successes and his own revolving credit agreement that makes him a true independent, the Cameron-produced *STRANGE DAYS* landed on the scene with a resounding thud and proved one of Fox's biggest money-losers of the year. His upcoming voyage as director of a *TITANIC* is risky sailing and could be just the project to take the winds out of this eclectic genre auteur's sails. But his flirting with state-of-the-

George Lucas release of a revamped *STAR WARS* is supposedly a prelude to making the next trilogy, but he has to deliver to maintain his ranking.



The reputation forged with *TERMINATOR 2* (above) keeps James Cameron near the top of the list, despite *STRANGE DAYS*.

art technology and his founding of Digital Domain will insure his continued relevance as a major figure in the genre for years to come.

# 4 MICHAEL CRICHTON

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

Who would think that the novelist turned filmmaker turned uber novelist would go from film oddities like *WESTWORLD* and *LOOKER* to genuine brand name boxoffice names. *CONGO* made close to \$100 million thanks to the

Crichton moniker (and it wasn't even any good), and his novel *The Lost World* roared up the bestseller list. Not since Stephen King has there been an author whose name meant more plastered on a movie marquee.

# 5 GEORGE LUCAS

(Last year's ranking: 6)

It's put up or shut up for George Lucas who's milking a 20-year-old franchise has kept the Lucasfilm coffers filled. Now with the impending release of a retuned *STAR WARS* which should do \$100 million easy, all eyes are turned towards the next Star Wars trilogy which is a merchandisers dream. But can George capture lightning in a bottle twice? Can he reinvent an idiom he created? And will he ever make it...first it was '97, then '98, now 1999. Snooze...

# 6 ROBERT ZEMECKIS

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

It may have been a long time since *BACK TO THE FUTURE*, but Zemeckis is using his *FORREST GUMP* clout as a major producer both on the small screen (with HBO's *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*) and on the big one. The latter includes championing Peter Jackson's bid for mainstream success by executive producing

*THE FRIGHTENERS* for him, as well as continuing the low-budget *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* feature series with *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*, from a script he co-wrote with Bob Gale. And he'll soon be back behind the camera as well, directing the big-budget *CONTACT*, from Carl Sagan's book, with Jodie Foster.

# 7 ROLAND EMMERICH & DEAN DEVLIN

(Last year's ranking: 10)

The dynamic duo, whose *STARGATE* soared to become a

Michael Crichton rockets to No. 4 as the new brand name genre author. Next: *THE LOST WORLD*.







Producer Rick Berman continues to rule supreme over STAR TREK, but the franchise's glory days seem to be past, unless Berman can rekindle the flame.

genuine boxoffice sleeper, were fielding offers from every studio in Hollywood. They landed at Twentieth Century-Fox with INDEPENDENCE DAY, an alien invasion movie, which should be this summer's biggest blockbuster. Not only that, but both are fans with a huge commitment to science fiction, which promises the best is yet to come, especially with TriStar asking them to wrangle their colossal Americanized GODZILLA to the big screen.

## 8 PEN DENSHAM, JOHN WATSON & RICHARD LEWIS

(Last year's ranking: 17)

The Trilogy troika have become

Sam Raimi's theatrical career seems stalled, but he's gone on to become a TV mogul with partner Rob Tapert.



MGM's TV titans since their new version of THE OUTER LIMITS scored big ratings and critical kudos in syndication, resulting in and the creative trio scores of new TV offers including POLTERGEIST: THE SERIES for Showtime. Next up, Pen Densham, director of THE KISS returns to helm for the big screen.

## 9 SAM RAIMI & ROBERT TAPERT

(Last year's ranking: 31)

Best known for their EVIL DEAD trilogy, Raimi and Tapert have quietly become TV moguls by producing HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS, XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS and the offbeat AMERICAN GOTHIC. Neither of their two features to receive major studio attention (DARKMAN and ARMY OF DARKNESS) were blockbusters, but with HERCULES shaping up as the biggest syndicated hit since STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, Raimi and Tapert's Detroit mafia is guaranteed a future in TV for a long time to come.

## 10 EDWARD R. PRESSMAN

(Last year's ranking: 8)

Although his JUDGE DREDD bombed at the boxoffice, producer Pressman's diverse slate of projects includes a number of genre films including THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS as well as THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU. Also ahead are live action versions of AKIRA, THE MUTANT CHRONICLES, and even his own comic book line.

## 11 CHRIS COLUMBUS

(Last year's ranking: 11)

Set to helm PLANET OF THE APES, Columbus has used the clout earned on non-genre films like MRS. DOUBTFIRE and HOME ALONE to fulfill some childhood fantasies, such as getting Roger Corman's low-budget FANTASTIC FOUR consigned to oblivion when he signed on to the big-budget version. A Spielberg protege who has made good.

## 12 RICK BERMAN

(Last year's ranking: 4)

The major domo of the TREK franchise, Berman not only rules supreme over the TV series, but the movie series as well. With interest in STAR TREK waning on the eve of its 30th anniversary, it will be up to Berman to captain his prized franchise through stormy seas and rekindle interest in sci-fi's first franchise.

## 13 JOHN LASSETTER

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

With the enormous success of TOY STORY, Lasseter's Pixar computer animation is scaring the hell out of pen and ink animators. Not to worry, they'll never be replaced...it's those carrying SAG cards who need to worry. Lasseter has set off a revolution no less significant than THE JAZZ SINGER, and TOY STORY's impact with be felt for a long time to come with Pixar as a major player in the action.

## 14 PAUL VERHOEVEN

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

SHOWGIRLS may be the best thing to ever happen to fans of the cinefantastique. Verhoeven has been driven from the world of cheesy erotic thrillers back to the genre that made him a name director. Now, at the helm of TriStar's pricey STARSHIP TROOPERS, expect Verhoeven to remind people why he's an A-list director in the first place.

## 15 STEPHEN KING

(Last year's ranking: 12)

While Hollywood has soured on the King name to put butts in the seats (recent King films like DOLORES CLAIBORNE and THE MANGLER have tanked at



Tim Burton suffered his first box-office failure with ED WOOD. Can MARS ATTACKS put him back on top?

the boxoffice), he continues to be a force to be reckoned with on the small screen (e.g. THE STAND, THE TOMMYKNOCKERS). So much so that he's even being allowed to pen THE SHINING as an ABC TV miniseries—despite the fact that as a Stanley Kubrick movie it should be deemed untouchable. But, even the house that King built, Laurel Entertainment, has folded.

## 16 JOEL SCHUMACHER

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The man who saved Warner Bros.' crown jewel, the BATMAN franchise, returns from a follow-up after proving he can keep the

Boxoffice continues to dwindle for Stephen King projects, but TV ratings keep him in the Top 20 of the list.





Caped Crusader flying high with a lighter version of the Burton-launched mythos. Schumacher's success leaves Burton behind as the man the studio perceives as almost having killed BATMAN.

## 17 TIM BURTON

(Last year's ranking: 3)

After stumbling with the critically acclaimed ED WOOD (his first commercial failure), Burton has had trouble getting his cherished MARS ATTACKS greenlighted by Warners, partially because of its similarities to Fox's INDEPENDENCE DAY which got launched first. With a slew of genre projects on the boards, including CATWOMAN, it's only a matter of time before Burton reclaims his place at the top of the genre heap.

## 18 GLEN MORGAN & JAMES WONG

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The two men who were considered the men who helped make the X-FILES don't-miss-TV its second season, went on space patrol for Fox this year. And while the show's ratings haven't gone through the roof, this former 21 JUMP STREET is considered some of Hollywood's hottest TV sci-fi scribes. Their future really rests on the whims of Fox which will have to make a decision about whether to continue their pricey series for next season. Does it have the ability to expand its audience? We'll see.

## 19 RONALD D. MOORE & BRANNON BRAGA

(Last year's ranking: 41)

Tapped to pen the next STAR TREK feature film installment, Braga and Moore have also teamed to continue the Freddy Krueger franchise with New Line's FREDDY VS. JASON. These prolific penmen promise to elude the Trek curse as they branch out beyond the final frontier.

## 20 JOSS WHEDON

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The man with the golden pen. His rewrite of SPEED soared and even he disowns his WATERWORLD revisions. However, as one of the brains behind TOY STORY and the man tapped by Fox to revive Ripley from the dead in ALIEN:

# TOP 50

## ROLAND EMMERICH AND DEAN DEVLIN

*The secret of their success: making the film you want to see on Friday.*

**A**fter STARGATE's startling success, and with INDEPENDENCE DAY fireworks approaching, the team of Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich stand out as major new talents in the realm of fantastic film. Having established a reputation for delivering big bangs for few bucks, they now have a chance to bring the multi-million dollar behemoth GODZILLA to the screen, whereas only a few years ago they had just graduated to their first American film, UNIVERSAL SOLDIER, after first working together in Germany on the generic sci-fi actioner MOON 44.

"I'd been an actor for 12 years, and he [Roland] cast me in this film," recalled Devlin of their working relationship's humble beginning. "I went to Germany to be in the movie. And what he was doing with the camera and the sets he was building made me think 'Wow, this guy sees these types of movies the same way I see them.' The only thing I didn't like was the way some of the script was writ-

ten. So I said, 'You oughta let me try writing some of this stuff for you. Then we started writing together. It's rare to find someone who sees so many things like you do.'

It's also rare for directors to allow that much input, as many Hollywood writers could tell you. "Normally on sets," said Devlin, "writers aren't allowed to be around directors, and directors don't get along with producers, because everyone has their own vision. Roland and I—in this type of film—see films very similarly. And so it makes a great shortcut when you write a script and try to make a movie, because we don't have to go through long explanations of the mood of the film, or the tone of the film, or the level of comedy. We naturally like the same thing. It's a good partnership, a unique partnership."

This love of writing goes beyond the film itself to working on the novelizations and comic book adaptations. Such care on all aspects of a film story is unusual. Perhaps that's what makes Devlin



Roland Emmerich has filmed his and Dean Devlin's elaborate scenarios without exorbitant spending.

Emmerich and Devlin scored big with last year's science-fiction action-fantasy STAR GATE. Up next is INDEPENDENCE DAY, followed by TriStar's GODZILLA.



and Emmerich a special team. So far, they have collaborated on science fiction themes. Is SF to remain their stock in trade? Devlin isn't certain: "After STARGATE we thought we wouldn't do another. We thought, next time we'd do an adventure movie or something different. And then Roland came up with the idea for this, and it was like we couldn't resist it.

"For us there's no big game plan. It's just whatever turns us on. We have a really simple philosophy at the company we started, Centropolis, which is, 'It's not the movie you want to see Wednesday; it's not the movie you want to rent on tape; it's the movie you want to stand in line on Friday.' If we hear an idea that sounds like the movie you want to stand in line for an hour-and-a-half on Friday and pay the babysitter and pay for parking, then that's the one we want to make." **Chuck Wagner**



# TOP 50

## ROGER CORMAN

*The King of Low-Budget Horror is still going strong, thanks to TV & video.*

Once a director of excellent horror films himself (MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH, TOMB OF LIGEIA) Roger Corman has remained in the executive office of his own company, Concorde/New Horizons, for the last 25 years (with the notable exception of directing FRANKENSTEIN BOUND six years ago), where he has been consistently successful at churning out low-budget genre productions. However, only a couple years ago, it seemed that his exploitation empire was in danger of being eclipsed by Charles Band's Full Moon. Since then, Band's direct-to-video horrors have lost their Paramount distribution deal, and Corman scored with a Showtime original series, "Roger Corman Presents," which gave his productions higher visibility than they've had in years.

According to Corman, Showtime "approached me and asked if I would like to do a series of films, not movies-of-the-week but actually motion-pictures—outside of

Roger Corman with Jonathan Demme on set of SILENCE OF THE LAMBS.



Though Corman has pretty much dropped out of the theatrical business, he scored with his ROGER CORMAN PRESENTS series on Showtime.

the United States, they'll be sold and exhibited as feature films. I said I would be very much interested. We talked about different genres, and I said I thought what would really be best would be a combination of some science-fiction and some horror. They agreed, and we agreed for whatever reasons, lucky or unlucky, on thirteen of them. The reviews have really been quite good, and the ratings have been as about as high or higher than anything else Showtime has, so everybody is very happy."

Corman still makes the odd foray into limited theatrical release (such as last year's REFLECTIONS IN THE DARK, with Mimi Rogers), but he also has plans to get back into the theatrical business in a bigger way; in fact, he put in a bid on the Samuel Goldwyn Company's theatre chain when the company went bankrupt. "I was interested in the Goldwyn chain to come back in [to the theatre business], but I was interested only in the theaters, not in the company as a whole. Their preference to sell the whole thing as one operation was

logical, and they had two bids on it."

Instead, Corman "will probably buy a few theaters and start to build and develop them there. There aren't too many circuits for sale, but there are individual theaters for sale. If I can get a few theaters in a few key cities, at least I'll be able to open my pictures more easily in the important cities. I would use them to play my own films and of course other films as well."

Not that this would put his films on an equal playing field with major studio releases, but even minor exposure "seems to help" the later video release, at least "a little bit. We've debated that, and I think just about everybody in the business has debated it. Our feeling is that it helps somewhat; it's not a tremendous help, but any little help you can get is fine. Also, I regret being somewhat out of the business. I started making pictures for theaters, and I hate to move so far away from it. We still do distribute some of our pictures on a regional basis, but I want to increase that." Steve Biodrowski

RESURRECTION, Whedon is one of the genre's hottest young screenwriters.

## 21 WILLIAM SHATNER ↓

(Last year's ranking: 15)

This one-man media empire may have stumbled with a quick cancellation of TEK-WAR and Paramount's rebuffs of overtures to bring Kirk back in the next TREK, but Shatner continues to strike out in new and interesting directions. Set to helm VIRTUAL HERO, Shatner is also involved in the burgeoning field of multimedia as well as being a novelist.

## 22 CHARLES LIPPINCOTT ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

Former Lucasfilm marketing maven, Lippincott's one man crusade to bring JUDGE DREDD to the screen bore fruit last year. Now, he has several sci-fi projects on the boards including an adult animated Heavy Metal-like project he's championing.

## 23 ROGER CORMAN ↑

(Last year's ranking: 24)

His ROGER CORMAN PRESENTS series on Showtime has scored big in the ratings and made his large library of films even more valuable. The Z-grade Ted Turner, Corman continues to expand into other media, including comics and has benefitted by the self-destruction of Charles Band's Full Moon empire. He moves back to the genre business which first put him on the map after filling the coffers with cheesy erotic thrillers and martial arts films.

## 24 GEORGE MILLER ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

After dropping out of CONTACT, Warners' big budget extraterrestrial interlude with Jodie Foster, Miller is doing what all reputable genre directors are doing these days: going to TV. Miller will be shepherding a MAD MAX series to the small screen, having realized this is where the money's to be made in the new electronic frontier. And, of course, Miller made a lot of bacon out of BABE, a sleeper success he produced and co-wrote at Universal.

## 25 PETER JACKSON ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The New Zealand filmmaker has



the benefit of being championed by golden boy Robert Zemeckis and his rushes on *THE FRIGHTENERS* have impressed Universal muckedy mucks enough to see that film's release date pushed up to summer. If it scores, Jackson stands to have the career abdicated by John Carpenter with his back to back flops of *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS* and *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*.

## 26 KENNETH JOHNSON ↓

(Last year's ranking: 27)

The continued ratings strength of Johnson's *ALIEN NATION* telefilms for Fox insures him the continued patronage of the network which is the real Sci-Fi Channel, Fox.

## 27 TOM HOLLAND

(Last year's ranking: 27)

After botching *THE LANGOLIERS*, Holland goes into Bachman Thinner overdrive with his latest foray into King territory. Shot in Maine, *THINNER* represents Holland's latest attempt to return to his *CHILD'S PLAY* glory days.

## 28 GALE ANNE HURD ↓

(Last year's ranking: 18)

A champion of young and emerging talent, Hurd's big bang for your budget approach scored her a slot on the Paramount summer slate with *RELIC*. However, there's no escaping (pun intended) that she's due for a hit—or it could be back to the New World budgets she began her career with.

**NO ESCAPE** did not advance Gale Anne Hurd's standing, but she should bounce back with *RELIC*.



Even with Kirk dead, William Shatner remains a familiar face on the genre scene, thanks to such work as *TEK WAR*. Next: directing *VIRTUAL HERO*.

## 29 DAVID KOEPP ↑

(Last year's ranking: 32)

Embarking on a directing career, Koepp scored a cool million for rewriting Brian DePalma's (or should we call that Tom Cruise's?) *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE* and has re-upped for jungle duty on Spielberg's *THE LOST WORLD*, the sequel to the Koepp co-written *JURASSIC PARK*. Self-effacing and talented, Koepp should soon put memories of *THE SHADOW* behind him.

## 30 BARRY SCHULMAN ↑

(Last year's ranking: 42)

As the Sci-Fi Channel becomes more involved with original productions as it gains greater market penetration, Schulman will become even more influential in the wide world of sci-fi television. As president, he's salvaged several series one thought would never again see the light of day.

## 31 DAVID TWOHY ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The writer whose work includes unfiled versions of *ALIEN 3* turns director with *SHOCK-WAVE*, another alien invasion movie, which will determine the future of its double threat writer-director.

## 32 STUART GORDON ↑

(Last year's ranking: 44)

After taking the wheel of the privately financed *SPACE TRUCKERS*, Gordon has re-animated a faltering career which

had confined him to low-budget hell. Yet to make good on the promises of *RE-ANIMATOR*, Gordon may yet have a chance to helm the big budget blockbuster that *TEENIE WEENIES* (which later became *HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS* under another director) promised to be for him.

## 33 GREGORY WIDEN ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

After acquitting himself admirably with his freshman directorial effort, *THE PROPHECY*, Widen, the original screenwriter of *HIGHLANDER*, is returning to revive that dead movie franchise as writer, director, and savior, for what his Dimension bosses hope will be an immortal life.

## 34 FRANK MANCUSO, JR. ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

Although the *FRIDAY THE 13TH* film franchise has run out of steam, Mancuso may have another long-lasting series in *SPECIES*, the sleeper hit of the summer, which combined elements of horror, science fiction, and erotic thrillers into a genre pastiche that scored with audiences hungry for a scarefest. With a high powered dad in Frank Mancuso running MGM, Junior stands to continue to be a sci-fi power player.

## 35 J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKY & DOUG NETTER ↓

(Last year's ranking: 25)

Although their *BABYLON 5* has never really taken over in the

ratings, its an international phenomenon and licensing interest has grown. What they've really shown is how to do a sci-fi series on a reasonable budget and integrate state of the art and less costly CGI effects which have paved the way for subsequent entries in the sci-fi TV sweepstakes.

## 36 RIDLEY SCOTT ↓

(Last year's ranking: 30)

Scott hasn't returned to the genre since *LEGEND* (unless you count the director's cut of *BLADE RUNNER*, released theatrically a few years ago), and his attempt to helm *CRISIS IN THE HOT ZONE* was thwarted by Warners rival *OUTBREAK*; however, he has plans to return in a big way, sequelizing his visionary and influential cyberpunk masterpiece. As the genre's master visual stylist, Scott, who put the *ALIEN* franchise on the map, continues to be a considerable force in the genre, and he has the production financing deals in place to bring his vision to the screen.

## 37 TRACY TORME ↑

(Last year's ranking: 46)

His *SLIDERS* series got a last minute reprieve from Fox, and with his fingers in several genre pies including a new version of *I AM LEGEND* for Warner Bros. and an SF series for HBO, Torme promises to continue his ascent up the Power 50 list in years to come. All he needs now is that elusive,

J. Michael Straczynsky has managed to improve *BABYLON 5*, but the ratings don't match *STAR TREK*, yet.





unmitigated hit.

## 38 ANDREW KEVIN WALKER ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

After two unimpressive screen credits (BRAINSCAN and HIDEAWAY), Walker scored big with one of the most literate screenplays of the year, SEVEN. Although his next project is not in the genre, he stands to score with another horrific thriller, THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN, to be produced by Scott Rudin at Paramount. Walker is not only a true talent, but also noticeably lacking in the ego and temperament associated with many of Hollywood's hottest.

## 39 BRETT LEONARD ↓

(Last year's ranking: 22)

His attempts to make virtual reality movies into the next big genre in Hollywood met with failure with the tepid boxoffice of HIDEAWAY and VIRTUOSITY. Although Leonard's mastery of the hottest hi-tech filmmaking technology could always lead to another LAWNMOWER MAN right around the corner.

## 40 PETER HYAMS ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The prolific, craftsman-like Hyams has toiled so often in the genre with films like OUTLAND, CAPRICORN ONE, and TIME COP, he's considered the John Badham of science-fiction films.

12 MONKEYS showed Terry Gilliam still has the clout to get his vision to the screen, albeit with less money.



With SEVEN, director David Fincher overcame his ALIEN 3 reputation and made himself a hot property in Hollywood. Let's hope he explores the genre further.

With RELIC next up at Paramount as a big summer release, a success could raise his stock, which he still needs after the disaster of STAY TUNED two summers ago.

## 41 MICHAEL DELUCA ↓

(Last year's ranking: 9)

There's no question that as a New Line topper DeLuca exercises a lot of power. And as a genre advocate, it's great to have a young genre fan in an executive position. Unfortunately, after his first screenwriting effort, the Lovecraft-tinged IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS, tanked at the boxoffice, DeLuca may be a little more tenuous in committing as a creative talent; and with New Line's new owner Ted Turner frowning on horror, DeLuca may be less able as an exec to champion other genre talents for the big screen.

## 42 FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA ↓

(Last year's ranking: 16)

An auteur with deep roots in sci-fi and horror (look no further than DEMENTIA 13), Coppola continues to display a fascination with the genre as executive producer of HAUNTED, an English ghost story, as well as his upcoming Robin Williams fantasy. Though MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN may have put an end to the briefest trend in film history (that of big-budget, overly romanticized remakes of classic horror begun with BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA) before THE VAN HELSING CHRONICLES or THE

INVISIBLE MAN could see the light of day, Coppola's continued dabbling in the genre has led to worthy efforts such as the Fox pilot, WHITE DWARF.

## 43 TERRY GILLIAM ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

Thanks to poor boxoffice returns, he may no longer command the big budgets of BRAZIL and THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN, but he still gets final cut—which raises the question: "Who has more power: a director like Kevin Reynolds who gets \$200 million to turn in a generic ROAD WARRIOR imitation and then is kicked out of the editing room, or Gilliam who works with less money but maintains complete control of his project?" It may have taken him a while to unleash TWELVE MONKEYS, but he brought it to the screen with his unique vision intact.

## 44 DAVID FINCHER ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

ALIEN 3 almost made him a permanent exile from Hollywood, but SEVEN has redressed all that, proving that his style, coupled with the substance of Andrew Kevin Walker's script, could reap cinema gold. Although his next project is out of the genre, his video-honed directorial style in the spirit of Ridley Scott will insure Fincher is no one-hit wonder.

## 45 TSUI HARK ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

The one man Hong Kong film

industry has not made the trip to America, unlike his one-time protege John Woo. But as producer and director he continues to bring his own unique brand of fantasy to the screen and to advance the careers of other young filmmakers. His influence can be seen, in such recent American efforts as STREET FIGHTER, MORTAL KOMBAT, and THE MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS; but none of them come close to matching his brand of artistry.

## 46 JOHN CARPENTER ↑

(Last year's ranking: 48)

If it weren't for Paramount's big budget commitment to the long aborning ESCAPE FROM L.A., Carpenter's career could have likely been derailed by the double disaster of last year's IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS and VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED. Still, despite the boxoffice failure of both, MADNESS at least proved that Carpenter could still pull a rabbit out of his hat, creating a unique and unusual fantasy-horror experience. Now, if he could just find a way to reach his audience again, the success of L.A. could put Carpenter back on top—but a failure could put him back on Showtime, wasting his still considerable talent on stuff like BODY BAGS.

## 47 HENRY SELICK ↑

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

With a return to stop-motion glory in JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH, Selick's THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE

Despite back to back boxoffice duds last year, John Carpenter is helming ESCAPE FROM L.A. at Paramount.





# TOP 50

## STUART GORDON

*The genre reanimator on updating modern horror.*

**S**tuart Gordon burst on the horror scene in the '80s with his delirious adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft, *RE-ANIMATOR*, which managed to be frightening, funny, and outrageous. His follow-up, *FROM BEYOND*—with its intimations of kinky sex and deadly invisible predators—demonstrated that he was no one-shot wonder and could possibly challenge the king of venereal horror in psychosexual terror. Since then, his work has been interesting but uneven, ranging from the intensity of *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM* to the somewhat lackluster *DOLLS*. His most recent credits include *FORTRESS*, *CASTLE FREAK*, and the forthcoming *SPACE TRUCKERS*.

Gordon buys into Stephen King's notion that horror films are rehearsals for our death. "The monster in all of these movies symbolizes the one thing that we fear the most," he said. "If you have to boil everything down into one fear, that would be it: we know that we cannot conquer death. That's why Freddy is always going to survive and Frankenstein's monster will always be with us: we know that we cannot destroy death, and it will always be waiting for us at some point in our life."

"I think that is part of the times that we live in. We can't accept fairy tales anymore. We distrust Hollywood endings. [However], we do need positive statements; we do need to say to people that you can make a difference—[just that the] problems are still going to be there waiting for you."

The recent trend of movies about serial killers, Gordon feels, reflected what was going on in our society. "The reality was so much more horrific than anything that Freddy Krueger could do that you had a lot more films dealing direct-

ly with the idea of serial killers. It's interesting to me that Quentin Tarantino's film *RESERVOIR DOGS* was shown at a lot of fantasy and horror film festivals, because it was very realistic; there was nothing really fantastical about that movie at all, but it did *horrify*."

Gordon notes the rise of Republicans with their theme of "family values" has suggested to people that "the violence in our streets is caused by the violence on television or in the movies, which they have never been able to document. In fact, the evidence actually seems to suggest that the opposite is more true, which is there is a cathartic effect to watching something violent. It kind of gets it out of your system in a way that is socially acceptable. If you stop making these kinds of movies, then the only way some people will have of expressing themselves is in real life on the streets."

"As a matter of fact, I read an interesting article that talked about serial killing being a form of artistic expression and that serial killing is a sort of very last resort to say to the world, 'I exist.' They



Although post-*REANIMATOR* efforts like *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM* (above) haven't scored big, Stuart Gordon is helming a big-budget *SPACE TRUCKERS*.

were actually comparing serial killing to graffiti. We live in a society which is trying to make us feel less and less important and more and more impotent, that we don't matter. People have to find ways to express themselves, and to express these darker images in a horror movie is the ideal way to do that."

Gordon continues to explore the limits of demented horror in *CASTLE FREAK*, with Jeffrey Combs, though without garnering the attention of *REANIMATOR*



However, we are living in an age where people are told that they should never have to hear or experience anything remotely unpleasant—a fantasy that can't possibly exist, despite any number of well-intentioned restrictions created to make it so. Death, being the substance of horror, naturally makes us come to terms with things that are upsetting and unsettling.

Gordon's recent projects have dealt with the fear of a family being destroyed, becoming dysfunctional and falling apart under modern pressures. If the family is the cornerstone of civilization and it has become a mess, what can we expect to happen on the streets? Modern horror films must grapple with these fears and concerns. "There are a lot of possible bases for new horror films," said Gordon. "You just look around and the world is a pretty horrifying place. I think that movies have to reflect that, and I think people have these fears and they want to be able to deal with these fears in a way that is safe and positive, and the horror movie is the way that you do that." **Dennis Fischer**



# TOP 50

## WES CRAVEN

*Freddy's creator wants to dream up new forms of horror.*

**I**n a career that has featured notable highs (the opening and closing chapters of the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series; the docu-horror hybrid THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW) and some disappointing lows (DEADLY FRIEND), Craven has more often than not demonstrated a desire to go beyond the hack-and-slash conventions that presently mark the horror genre. Whether toying with notions of reality and fantasy in A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, or satirizing the avaricious bent of '90s-style racism in THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS, the writer-director has provided sufficient evidence that, in his world, mind matters as much as blood-bags.

"There's a lot of social pressure *not* to make a horror film," Craven admitted, "and *not* to be shocking. People bring all these P.C. attitudes towards them. In many ways, they are crass, upsetting, and exploitative. The positive thing about them is that there's something very primarily important about them; they break out hidden fears, terrors, and premonitions that I think are important. We don't know why they're there; they don't seem to do a damn thing for us, but for some reason the body produces them—they obviously perform some function."

Craven has been able to tap into that function, even if unconsciously, and develop a character that has left an indelible mark on the horror genre. "At a certain point," said Craven of

the creation of A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET's incorporeal dream-killer Freddy Krueger, "the charismatic psychopath definitely had a lot of heat to it. I think that started with HALLOWEEN: you have this mysterious figure in a mask whose only purpose was to kill for something that happened in the past, but which really wasn't important. I remember when I was drafting out NIGHTMARE there was definitely a discernible pattern to films that had been very successful between FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH and TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and NIGHTMARE: a central figure who was mysterious, usually unnamed, or if named, it didn't tell you much about him. Usually, he was behind some sort of a mask and had some weird sort of killing implement. I went through the exercise with Freddy: what kind of implement, how to mask him. I came up with my own variation based on my not wanting to have my character masked that much. The original impulse behind the burn-scarring was that it lent some element of the mask to it. There is something in the culture that responds to the mask and what's behind the mask. You can only speculate that there's a perception in society that there's a sort of mask of civilization, and behind that there's a psychopathic need to kill on the part of some human beings. With the psychopath, you can't see past the mask to figure out who's back there and why they're doing what they're doing. That's something unique to our

century, the sense that there's a mask and behind it there's something after you that you could never really identify with."

Not all of this, admitted Craven, was by design: "For me, it was just seeing articles about people dying in their dreams. I was just gripped by that idea. I was toying with ideas of dreaming and people having dreams that maybe were real and maybe were not before I even saw those articles. It was something just cooking up from my subconscious. I certainly wasn't sitting around



With his NEW NIGHTMARE, Wes Craven returned to the franchise he created, resulting in one of the best and most original horror films in recent years.

trying to think of what the next trend in horror was; I really think the best of horror is done by artists that have individual, unique, powerful ideas that come welling up out of them. Those are very rare."

Amongst projects the director is considering for the near-future: a non-genre, coming-of-age pic; and one that will bring the fast-paced action of Hong Kong-style ghost stories to America. "It's not that far from DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE," said Craven of the latter. "You have incredible action put into a horror environment with supernatural elements. I think the audience is there for that kind of"—he chuckles—"mindless action, frankly. MTV has created that visual appetite for more: more cuts, more camera movement. And I think the kind of exuberance of image done in the Chinese pictures is refreshing. They don't have the same limits. I also think it's obvious they're not restricted quite that much by unions. I just sense they can get a lot more on-screen for the buck than we can, especially those of us that are more established. It gets really expensive to do some of the things that you can imagine doing more cheaply but aren't allowed to."

Does this mean a move away from the more straight-line horror? "In some sense. I certainly don't want to turn my back on it, you know. But I do want to do things that continue to appeal to the audience that appreciated NEW NIGHTMARE—that is: I want a certain level of intelligence and understanding to be brought to my films. As an adult, I have the right to expect that. I don't want to be appealing just to an audience that's looking for something flashier or gorier; that gets old for me. People say, 'We love the gore scenes,' or 'We love the one where you pulled out his eyeball,' and you go 'Oh God, if that's your standard...' I can't feel comfortable with that, anymore."

"When you do the first decade of that kind of film, I think they're fresh and exciting and fun. But at a certain point I felt like I needed to move on to other kinds of films. I still love the genre; I still love doing films that are scary and exciting and weird. I just don't want to be cranking out the next NIGHTMARE; it [makes me] feel too much like a franchise merchant. I've heard that phrase too many times to feel comfortable setting out to do it, anymore." **Dan Persons**

Craven's low-budget success got him a shot at a major studio pic, Eddie Murphy's VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN, but the result failed to pay off in a big way.





CHRISTMAS should prove to be no one-hit wonder. And if GIANT PEACH also scores as a licensed property (NIGHTMARE fared poorly in toy form), Selick will be sitting in the drivers seat for future film outings.

## 48 WES CRAVEN

(Last year's ranking: 47)

Despite creating the best NIGHTMARE movie since his original trip down ELM STREET, Craven has yet to achieve a crossover success. Drained by the boxoffice implosion of VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN (which, instead of reaching a wider audience with Eddie Murphy in the lead, fared no better than the average no-name-cast independent horror film), Craven is nevertheless still considered a horror maestro and will be taking the reins of Dimension's remake of THE HAUNTING. He could use a hit, however.

## 49 PAUL ANDERSON

(Last year's ranking: unlisted)

It may have been critically eviscerated, but after being championed by producer Larry Kasanoff, Anderson, who only had a small British film under his belt, proved to be able to handle a big budget and huge scope with adaptation of the popular arcade game, MORTAL KOMBAT. After bowing out of THE STARS, MY DESTINATION, Anderson is set to receive a \$2 million fee to helm SOLDIER, a science-fiction Western about a SHANE-type hero who defends down-trodden settlers on a distant planet, from a script by David Peoples (BLADE RUNNER).

## 50 CHARLES BAND

(Last year's ranking: 14)

With financial matters nearly shuttering Full Moon, Charles Band has once again reinvented himself. But after the end of Empire and Full Moon's own problems along with the lack of quality associated with the majority of his offerings, Band's reach may exceed his grasp. On the verge of a major breakthrough only two years ago with their Paramount contract, the expansion of Torchlight and Moonbeam labels and a comic imprint, Full Moon may be permanently eclipsed by the more successful and conservative Corman approach.

# TOP 50

## GREGORY WIDEN

*The creator of HIGHLANDER grounds fantasy in reality.*

**G**regory Widen hit it big his first time out, writing the script for HIGHLANDER while still a student at UCLA. His screenwriting teacher was so impressed with his final project, a finished first draft, that he encouraged Widen to shop it around. It eventually sold to the producing team of Bill Panzer and Peter Davis. Though HIGHLANDER fared better in Europe, it developed a devoted following and eventually spawned two sequels and a TV show now in its fourth season. And, for those who believe in synchronicity, Widen currently is negotiating to direct a third sequel aimed at setting the faltering movie series back on track.

After the non-genre BACKDRAFT, Widen returned to fantasy with his impressive feature directorial debut, from his own script, on THE PROPHECY (his first directing credit was the TALES FROM THE CRYPT episode, "Halfway Horrible"). While the special effects budget didn't reflect the premise, Widen showed flair for using the camera to tell the story visually.

"I think [I'm] a story director," said Widen. "And I think every director ultimately has to be an actor director, or you're screwed. But I think that I'm drawn to stories because I started as a writer. I don't mind being cute with the camera, but I think the main point is to tell the story and try not to get in the way. If it helps, great. But mainly you just have to get out of the way."

Though Widen wants to continue directing, writing is his first love. "I think I'm a writer in my soul. I like directing. I love writing. I want to keep directing, but I think it's probably not as much—at least at this point in my life—[a] piece of me that writing is."

Despite his proven aptitude, Widen doesn't consider himself



Gregory Widen's impressive directorial debut with THE PROPHECY has led to an offer to helm a sequel to HIGHLANDER (above), which he wrote.

just a fantasy writer. "I kind of go both ways," he said. "I don't really think of myself as a fantasy writer, per se. I've just had a couple of fantasy ideas that creep into my head once in a while that just explode. [It's harder] to write fantasy, because you have to create a believable world with rules. Too often, fantasy films fail because [there's] a feeling, 'Well gee, anything can happen.' Well, if anything can happen, nothing's interesting. So the challenge of a fantasy film is to create a believable, functional world in which you throw in a couple of monkey wrenches that are new. And that's what HIGHLANDER tried to do—it's like a stable, understandable world, but this guy never died. And you try to make everything else support that."

"I think that becomes the most interesting kind of fantasy. I've never liked the sort of Merlin, snakes-into-rabbits, sword-in-the-stone kind of fantasy, because I don't understand what I'm holding onto. And to me, it has to ultimate-

ly be about something real that I can grasp, with a kind of fantastic twist to it. So I would never consider myself a pure fantasy, sword-and-sorcery sort of fan. It sounds ironic, but I really like stuff rooted in reality, with maybe a curveball thrown in."

If one element does cross over between his film projects, it's the notion of secret societies or elite groups, ranging from immortals to firemen to angels. "I was always fascinated by that," explained Widen, "groups of people doing their own thing quietly in the background, and you don't really notice them. Though the stakes are huge, they're not out in front, and when they win or lose, there aren't big parades for them and there's not a lot of attention paid to them. These battles are still extremely important and yet they're quietly going on down at the back of dark alleys that you don't even know about. I don't know if I consciously [explore this theme], but it just comes naturally to me." **Matthew F. Saunders**



# TOP 50

## MICHAEL DELUCA

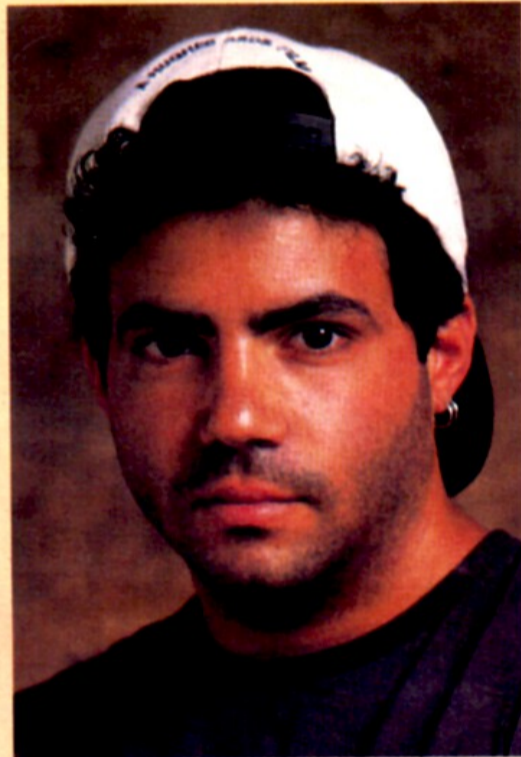
*A rare executive who's genre literate—and talented, to boot.*

**M**ichael DeLuca is a rare combination of screenwriter and production executive. After leaving NYU film school, he joined New Line Cinema eleven years ago, where he has worked on production, marketing, distribution, and screenwriting. His first horror film writing credit was for *FREDDY'S DEAD: THE FINAL NIGHTMARE* which he wrote because "we had two scripts that weren't working, and we were under the gun, so I did a draft for the director [Rachel Talalay] out of desperation."

The film was a big success, but it didn't reveal the level of talent on display in his follow-up, John Carpenter's *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*. "It was cool," said DeLuca of working with the director, whom he describes as "great, really knowledgeable, easy-going, very professional. He's always been one of my favorite genre guys." DeLuca was inspired to write the script by the Port Authority in New York: "It's full of people who look like they come from another dimension."

DeLuca also worked on an early story treatment for *JUDGE DREDD*. "Then they fired me and got someone else to write the script," he said. "Basically, [all that is left is] just the thread that the villain of the piece is Dredd's brother; everything else was taken over by the subsequent 80 screenwriters."

Splatterpunk author David Schow has called DeLuca one of the few literate film executives, and DeLuca does read in the genre, everything from Lovecraft and Richard Matheson to Stephen King, David Schow, and Ramsey Campbell. "Horror literature is great because it is so much easier to be scared when it's your imagination," commented DeLuca. "I like reading it a lot." This background puts



**IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS** showed double threat writer-executive Michael DeLuca (l) getting a difficult project to the screen, but his status is uncertain in the wake of New Line's acquisition by Ted Turner, who dislikes horror.

DeLuca a step above most Hollywood execs, who equate horror with gore effects—never mind the story.

DeLuca is considering "probably writing full-time at some point." Though it's not true that DeLuca could greenlight his own script ("The head of our company [Robert Shaye] makes that decision; I just suggest strongly what we should do"), he obviously has an edge. But is it becoming more difficult to get a horror film made? According to DeLuca, "It depends on the scale of the project. It's hard to get a high-budgeted horror film made because a lot of people won't go see a horror film unless there's a big star attached. The lower the budget, the easier it is to get made because there is a core audience that's available on a low-budget level and a home video level that makes it a safe investment."

DeLuca believes that horror films are still viable in today's market. "I think so only because I count *WOLF*, *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*, and *DRACULA* as horror films. They just happen to



be big, lavish ones. In my opinion, the genre is thriving because studios are spending more money on them and they're getting bigger stars to be in them."

New Line has received a large cash infusion from the purchase by Ted Turner, who wisely kept the studio personnel intact rather than mess with success. Although there were fears that Turner's conservative approach would spell the end for New Line's horror product, DeLuca doesn't see it that way. He expects future horror releases from New Line to be "a mixed bag. There'll be a few monster movies, a few psychological thrillers, a few suspense movies... The biggest expectation that an audience has for a horror film is, 'Will this make me feel dread?' That's always going to be the central thing in these movies; it's kind of like a cathartic thrill ride. It just depends if the elements get delivered or not." He doesn't see much change in the future. "I think people will be looking for the same things. They just want to be scared."

Dennis Fischer

## COMEBACK TRAIL

Some of our favorite genre talents haven't been heard from in awhile, or else their recent work hasn't lived up to the early efforts that made their reputations. Here is an alphabetical listing of those we expect to hear from soon, in the hope that they will regain their former glory.

### DARIO ARGENTO

The giallo director's efforts in America were a double disappointment: they didn't live up to the best of his Italian work, and they didn't break him into mainstream respectability. Now, he's back where he belongs, making an uncompromised horror film in his native country. No more Mr. Nice Guy!

### CLIVE BARKER

For all his talk about reaching a wider audience by combining horror with mystery, Barker proved with *LORD OF ILLUSIONS* that his filmic sensibility is aimed squarely at a cult audience which makes few demands for coherence as long as the *de rigueur* horror motifs are on display.

### DAVID CRONENBERG

Nary a peep was heard from his adaptation of M. BUTTERFLY, and his last genre effort, *NAKED LUNCH*, was sub-par. But Cronenberg hopes to thunder back onto the scene with *CRASH*, his adaptation of J.G. Ballard's seminal tome. He's come back before, scoring a great success with *THE FLY* in 1986 after the double disappointments of *VIDEODROME* and *THE DEAD ZONE*. Let's hope history repeats itself; otherwise, the king of visceral horror may become the king of unemployable directors.

### JOE DANTE

Dante hit his boxoffice peak with *GREMLINS* over a decade ago. Since then, he's done some good work, without ever quite reaching his audience again. Now, he's at work on *THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES*, a promising pilot for a science-fiction series, created by *THE ALIENIST* author Caleb Carr.

### BRIAN DEPALMA

His horror films in the '70s earned



him entry into the arena of big-budget Hollywood filmmaking. Since then, his greatest successes have been with gangster pictures (SCARFACE, THE UNTOUCHABLES, and CARLITO'S WAY), while his genre efforts have been notably disappointing (BODY DOUBLE, RAISING CAIN). The feature version of MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE, with its science-fiction-tinged espionage, should earn him back some stature in the genre.

## PAUL DIMEO & DANNY BILSON

The underrated TV auteurs of THE FLASH are at it again. Not only are they doing a new series for UPN, THE SENTINEL, but their short-lived supercar series, VIPER, is coming back in first-run syndication. Now there's a comeback we didn't really need, did we?

## WILLIAM FRIEDKIN

It's pretty much been a downhill ride at the boxoffice since THE EXORCIST, and a reported re-teaming with author William Peter Blatty never materialized. But occasional signs of the old talent have surfaced in TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A. and in RAMPAGE (at least before the disastrous re-cutting for Miramax). Attached to direct an adaptation of the alleged true diary of a man who proclaimed himself Jack the Ripper, Friedkin could once again show us how to take a serious approach to horrific material.

## DAVID LYNCH

After TWIN PEAKS peaked in popularity, Lynch has had trouble

Brian DePalma's last genre outing, RAISING CAIN, failed as a comeback. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE may succeed.



William Friedkin's career has been erratic since the excellence of THE EXORCIST but his new Jack the Ripper film will give him a chance to get back on track.

regaining the critical accolades that once flowed freely. Now, he's directing a new feature, LOST HIGHWAY. Let's hope that influential Lynchian sensibility is back in full force; otherwise, we'll just have to be satisfied with the many worthwhile imitations, like THE KINGDOM and MYSTERY OF RAMPO.

## ROMAN POLANSKI

His career has never really been the same since his American exile, but BITTERMOON was an excellent black comedy. Now he has a project starring John Travolta as a man haunted by his double (shades of Poe's William Wilson).

## MISSING IN ACTION

Unlike our favorite talents listed above, the following filmmakers have no current genre projects in development that promise a comeback any time soon. On the other hand, their past reputations would indicate that, whenever they do get back to the fantasy realm, we should be in for a treat.

## STANLEY KUBRICK

The celebrated auteur has never had the kind of flop that would reduce the clout he had to command big-budgets and final cut of his films. He just hasn't worked in years: his last genre effort, THE SHINING, was released in 1980! He is supposedly committed to a new big-budget SF film entitled A.I., which would have put him on the

comeback list; but that project is now on the back burner, as he is developing a mainstream project starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

## JOHN BOORMAN

Mere flashes of fantasy and mysticism surfaced in his latest film, BEYOND RANGOON, a moving effort that nevertheless failed to find an audience. Despite his diminishing success, he has shown no sign of dwindling talent, and we can only hope he manages to pull another EXCALIBUR out of the stone sometime soon.

## GEORGE ROMERO

His studio-funded best seller adaptations, MONKEY SHINES and THE DARK HALF, failed to make him a major player in Hollywood. Even more disappointing to the fans than the lack of boxoffice success was the fact that neither film even approached the anarchic horror of his LIVING DEAD trilogy, a true landmark in the genre. Maybe his specialized talent just won't adapt to Hollywood, and he should get back to the independent features that made his reputation.

## KNOCKING ON THE DOOR

Some people do a good job when they deign to tackle fantasy, but they've yet to establish a body of work that would justify inclusion in the Top 50 list. Here are some whom we expect to see in the future, should they live up

## CORPORATE ENTITIES

Some corporations are bigger than any one person, although there may be principal people involved who guide company decisions. In order not to overlook contributions that cannot be ascribed to an individual, we present this list of entities that have shown the ability and willingness to provide a steady output of genre fare.

### 1 WALT DISNEY PICTURES

With an unbroken string of animated fantasy hits, this company continues to be the only major studio with brand-name recognition: they can take on any subject, and their audience will come, because it's a Disney film. Not only that, but their animated films hold up against the best of live-action filmmaking today. With THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME and FANTASIA CONTINUED in the works, they should be delighting audiences to the end of this century and beyond.

### 2 DIMENSION PICTURES

Although Miramax's still-developing genre division has relied thus far on sequels to franchises with tenuous futures at best (e.g., HALLOWEEN), they are now putting their faith in creative talent which should make them a major player into the 21st century. Among those on board: writer-directors Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino, Wes Craven, and Gregory Widen.

### 3 NEW LINE CINEMA

Although its acquisition by Ted Turner lessens the possibility of continued emphasis on horror franchises like A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET and FRIDAY THE 13TH, this company will continue to work in the field by emphasizing fantasy-oriented projects with greater mainstream appeal, like THE MASK and MORTAL KOMBAT, both of which will no doubt be sequelized in the near future.

### 4 SCI-FI MEDIA MAGAZINES

From Cinescape to Starlog, Cinefantastique to Sci-Fi

continued on next page



Universe, Starlog to Sci-Fi Channel Magazine, the world of sci-fi media magazines has grown geometrically over the last two years, and their influence is felt by the creators of sci-fi film and TV who scramble evermore to publicize their films in a multitude of new venues. More and more fans are turning to these magazines to make their decisions in a crowded genre marketplace.

## 5 TEKNO-COMICS

A comic company which proves you cannot thrive on money and marketing alone. Although their comic offerings have been greeted with a proverbial sigh in today's soft comic book market, their deep pockets and continuing involvement with many of Hollywood's top talents (including Quentin Tarantino and Tom Clancy) and their efforts in the world of interactive multimedia may yet lead to this becoming the breeding ground for tomorrow's big SF movies.

## 6 DIGITAL DOMAIN, SONY IMAGESOFT

Watch out ILM! Lucas' visual effects house, which has had a stranglehold on the business since its inception, is facing its first real competition in over a decade with the emergence of Digital Domain (Cameron's company, comfortably nestled next to Dreamworks on their new studio lot in Playa Vista) and Sony Imagesoft, where ILM-ex patriot Ken Ralston has gone to crank Sony's in-house effects arm into overdrive. With state-of-the-art technology and alliances (can anyone say IBM?), ILM may be needing those new STAR WARS movies as much as Lucasfilm.

## 7 STREAM-LINE PICTURES

A deal for video distribution with Orion has made this company's catalogue of great Japanimation more accessible to a wider audience than ever before. And they haven't abandoned their art house theatrical distribution either. Though plans for their own in-house productions have yet to materialize, they deserve recognition for bringing the work of animation greats like Katsuhiro Otomo, Hiyazao Miyazaki, and Yoshiaki Kawajiri to the attention of appreciative American audiences. □



Director and co-writer Chris Noonan make a brilliant debut with *BABE*. If he follows it up with similar success, entrance to the Top 50 should not take long.

to the potential they've displayed so far.

## DANNY CANNON

JUDGE DREDD may have sunk, but Danny Cannon proved himself a visual maestro as he navigated Sylvester Stallone through the mean streets of Mega City One. A visual stylist in the mold of the Scott brothers, are you gonna go that way?

## H. R. GIGER

Like David Lynch and David Cronenberg, two filmmakers whom he admires, this Swiss surrealist has had a huge influence on SF and fantasy—so much so in fact that, if we were rating influence rather than clout, he would be a guaranteed entry on the list. Still, Hollywood has failed to give him his due, seldom allowing him the control to see his biomechanical creature designs realized on-screen to his own satisfaction. Nor have investor lined up to finance his own dream project, *THE MYSTERY OF SAN GOTARDO*. Here's a man whose unique talent deserves support; let's hope Hollywood finally gives it to him.

## PATRICK READ JOHNSON

After the boxoffice failure of *BABY'S DAY OUT* which featured some of the most impressive effects work you didn't notice in recent cinema history, Johnson turns his attention to a new update on the Sinbad mythos (not to be confused with Ed Naha's upcoming TV series of Sinbad). With a reverent eye towards

Harryhausen, Johnson is one to watch as he looks to revive a legendary cinema staple.

## RICHARD LE GRAVANESE

One of the finest screenwriters now working, his work has only occasionally been tinged with the fantastic, as in *THE FISHER KING* and *A LITTLE PRINCESS*. With any luck, the success of *THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY* (which he adapted for Clint Eastwood) gives him the clout to help Terry Gilliam get their script collaboration, *THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE*, in front of the cameras.

## CHRIS NOONAN

The greatest debut in a year of great debuts was definitely *BABE*, directed by Chris Noonan, who also co-wrote the script with George Miller. Will Hollywood give the credit for the success to the first-time director or assign it to the more well-known producer? If he can pull off a similar success on his own, Noonan should be a guaranteed contender for Top 50 inclusion.

## DAVID PEOPLES

From *BLADE RUNNER* to *TWELVE MONKEYS*, he's collaborated on some fine science-fiction screenplays (the later with his wife Janet), but his greatest success was a Western, *UNFORGIVEN*. He may not have the clout to get a SF project off the ground, nor does he consider himself exclusively a SF writer, but when he does turn his sights on the genre, he delivers.

## KEVIN REYNOLDS

He was kicked out of the editing room on *WATERWORLD*, but the film wasn't half as bad as anyone expected, and it actually did okay business. His dramatic sensibility isn't the most finely tuned, but he can deliver the action-packed goods. Judgment is out: we have to wait to see whether he tries his hand at other post-apocalypse fantasies. Certainly, we hope his experience on Kevin Costner's *WATER WARRIOR* retread hasn't scared him off.

## ANNE RICE

Her novels have long been a source of unofficial inspiration for filmmakers seeking to update the old horror myths for the 20th century, and her script from her own novel, *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, went on to become the most successful supernatural horror film in recent memory. In the process, however, she managed to alienate Hollywood with her protests over casting Tom Cruise—which she later retracted. Writers have never been given much clout in Tinseltown, and being an outspoken woman doesn't win her any favor with the sexist hierarchy. On the other hand, it doesn't hurt that James Cameron (who has never had a problem working with strong women) is considering her book, *The Mummy*, as one of his next projects.

## DARIN SCOTT & RUSTY CUNDIEFF

Producer-writer Scott made a notably inauspicious debut with *FROM A WHISPER TO A*

Long the source of inspiration for other movies, *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* scored big when finally adapted, but will Hollywood want to work with author Anne Rice again?





SCREAM. Since then, he has earned some respect with urban melodramas like *MENACE II SOCIETY*, which he used to get *TALES FROM THE HOOD* off the ground, a hip urban variation on the old Amicus anthology format co-written and directed by Rusty Cundieff. If they can crossover to greater mainstream success, great things could be in their future.

## **GUILLERMO DEL TORO**

The Mexican writer-director earned rave reviews for his ambitious debut, *CRONOS*, but his film failed to achieve the breakout success of *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE*. Since then, Hollywood has come calling; he has at least two films in development, but neither one has been launched yet.

## **STEVE WANG**

The master of kinetic Hong Kong-type action on a miniscule budget, Steve Wang's *HONG KONG RASCALS* and *GUYVER II* improved on the original and showed the promise of an inventive and talented talent. Although he almost got his first major break on *POWER RANGERS*, it's only a matter of time before the sci-fi John Woo gets his breakthrough film.

## **THE CELLAR**

How the mighty have fallen! Despite continued attention from the genre press, several favored sons have failed to achieve hoped-for crossover success, in the process squandering whatever potential they once had.

## **TOBE HOOPER**

Perhaps unfairly, his once box-office hit, *POLTERGEIST*, is commonly credited to exec producer Steven Spielberg. Since then, his career has steadily deteriorated, reaching its nadir with *THE MANGLER*, probably last year's worst, most unsuccessful horror film.

## **GARY KURTZ**

Since falling out of favor with George Lucas, Kurtz has all but disappeared from Hollywood.

## **SCREAM QUEENS**

Gone are the days when Jamie Lee Curtis and Sharon Stone could go from screaming to becoming major stars. Now, Scream Queens start in horror and stay there, never to be heard from again. □

# TOP 50

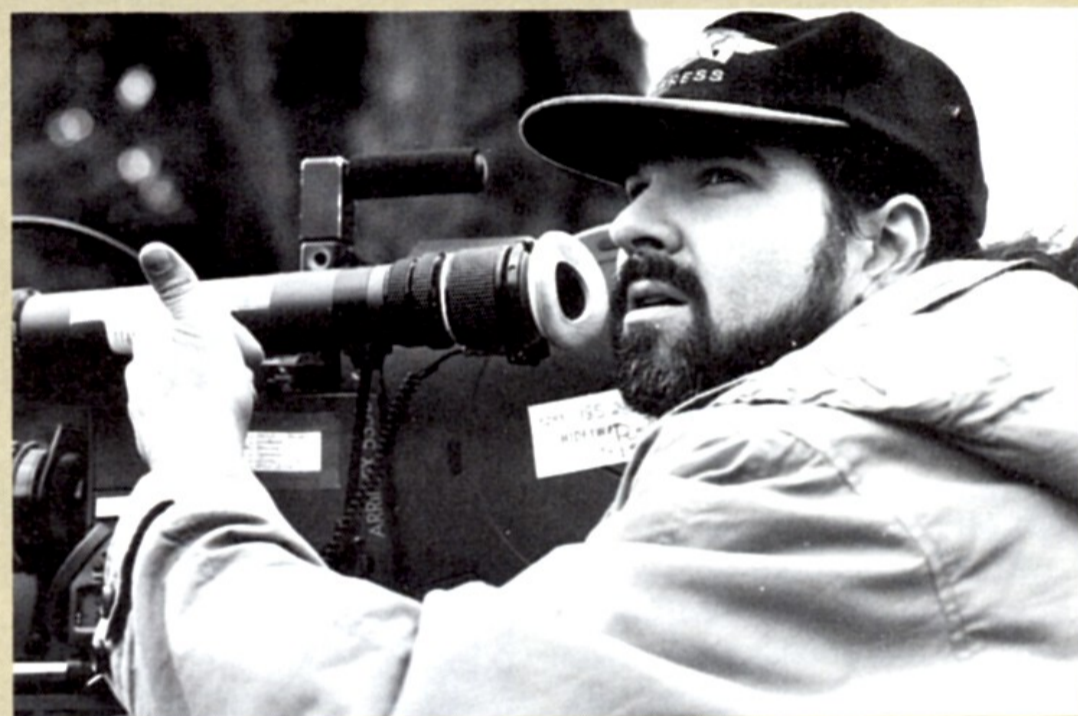
## **BRETT LEONARD**

*High-tech guru of Virtual Reality has yet to score big in the majors.*

**B**rett Leonard became a hot property after the independent success of 1992's *LAWNMOWER MAN*. With the release of two major studio films, *HIDEAWAY* and *VIRTUOSITY*, 1995 looked like his year, but both films achieved limited critical and commercial success. Leonard continues to woo audiences and studio executives with accomplished special effects and hot high-tech themes such as Virtual Reality, but he risks losing credibility due to poorly conceived stories and characters. Although his recent films didn't live up to their potential, it's his creative stewardship of VR and related emerging technologies that helps earn Leonard his ranking.

Leonard doesn't consider himself a VR guru—even though his own company, L2 Communications, provided *VIRTUOSITY*'s CG effects—but he's played a significant role in shaping the subgenre. While *BRAINSTORM* figures prominently in VR's pre-history, it's Leonard's *LAWNMOWER MAN* that introduced VR to mainstream audiences. Said Leonard, "In *LAWNMOWER MAN*, I had to talk about [VR] a lot because no one knew what the hell that term meant. Now you can't pick up a newspaper and not see the term used. I had to fight to get the term used in the movie at all because the marketers and people were terrified of using something that no one knew about."

Although Leonard's career has centered largely around VR-related technologies, he quickly dismisses the notion that VR is becoming overused and passé. "Virtual reality is so broad as an idea," he countered. "I think cinema is virtual reality. I think it's about these media being extensions of ourselves. It's all these interesting concepts, which are being played out in insanely absurd displays in



Brett Leonard's two studio films after *LAWNMOWER MAN*'s success failed to perform up to expectations, but his next hit could be just around the corner.

our culture. Whether it's a person with head goggles or not is really beside the point. That's not the interesting thing to me. That's just a symbol for something."

Leonard does dismiss the importance of VR gadgets, such as goggles, gloves, and head gear. "That was supposed to be the alienating form of this technology. [VR is] really about what we're doing as a human community and how we communicate with technology, as opposed to what the actual hardware is. I think the hardware [is] being put to rest. But the idea of what we're turning into through cyberspace, the Internet, and connecting with global electronic communities—that's the thing that's going to continue."

Leonard's films explore the effects on people and society of the misuse of, and subsequent loss of control over, technology and/or preternatural abilities, although critics may disagree about his level of success in dealing with these themes: *LAWNMOWER MAN* dealt with the misuse of VR on Jobe and his loss of self-control. *HIDEAWAY* examined the misuse of resuscitation technology and the

lack of control over the Vassago character. And *VIRTUOSITY* focused on the misuse of VR and nano-technology and the loss of control over S.I.D. 6.7.

"I think that dealing with things that get out of control—whether it's a psychic connection or technology—is just exploring. I enjoy stories about characters that explore extreme edges of experience. You're able to take audiences and maybe play visually with something that doesn't really fall into traditional narrative logic, but just plays into pure cinema. I'm really into this pure vision cinema. I see my films as more experience films, [rather] than narrative."

Despite the mixed success of his quick rise to big budgetdom, Leonard remains unconcerned. "There're a lot of tradeoffs in doing large-scale feature films. What I do for a living is create this stuff. I think the people who give you money deserve accountability. At the same time, the pressures of a studio film are very different from the independent world. If you decide you want to make large-scale films, you're going to have to deal with that. It's just part of the nature of doing it." **Matthew F. Saunders**



# TREMORS II

**The giant worms return in this DTV sequel.**

By Dan Scapperotti

What are 24 feet long, live underground, and have very nasty attitudes? They're the Graboids, the giant worm-like creatures that rose from the desert sands in *TREMORS* (1991), and they're back! MCA/Universal Home Video will release *AFTERSHOCKS: TREMORS II* this month.

Making his feature film directing debut is Steve Wilson. A writer-producer who entered the industry through stop-motion and puppet animation, Wilson authored *Puppets & People*, an authoritative, fact-packed book on the techniques of stop-motion animation. Wilson and his partner, Brent Maddock, were gag writers for Chuck Jones before tackling feature screenplays.

The original idea for the peculiar monsters in *TREMORS* came to Wilson during a desert walk. "I was hiking in the desert, and I sat down on a rock. Looking down at the sand, I thought, what if there was something under the sand and I couldn't get off this rock? I wrote that down in 1978." Like so many good ones, the idea sat in a drawer until Wilson and Maddock clicked with their screenplay for *SHORT CIRCUIT*.

The key to the film, according to Wilson, was having two ordinary guys go up against the monsters. "This was such a '50s idea of big things under the ground that we started asking what could we do to make this different from those movies," said Wilson. "That's when we came up with our list of characters. Instead of the National Guard, the sheriff, and scientists, our heroes would be just two ordinary guys who are barely equipped to deal with the situation."

Though the film performed modestly in theatres, the video release reached a wider audience. MCA/Universal Home Video wanted a sequel, and Stampede Productions, operated by Wilson, Maddock, Ron



Writer Steve Wilson (seen here with actress Helen Shaver) makes his directing debut on *AFTERSHOCKS: TREMORS II*, the direct-to-video sequel to *TREMORS*.

Underwood (director of *TREMORS*), and Nancy Robertson, was eager to provide it.

The common thought was that the creatures would obviously move to a big city possibly running amuck in New York's subways. But, Wilson had another idea to throw off audience expectations.

"We didn't want to do the Alien Queen version of *TREMORS*," he said. "Someone came up with the idea of what would happen if they fragmented into something. And that got me going, because I always thought there was a scary movie in small creatures. I thought that would be fun. It's not what people expect. You expect them to turn into something bigger—a Tyrannosaurus Rex or something. So we decided to have them fragment into little guys—but mean little guys: the Shriekers."

Fred Ward returns as Earl Basset, who is offered \$50,000 to rid a Mexican oil field of the huge subterranean worms. Basset meets the company geologist, Kate White (Helen Shaver), and also arriving south of the border is Burt Gummer, played by Michael Gross, the only other cast member returning for the sequel. The battle against the Graboids goes well until something changes, and a new horror confronts Basset

and his friends.

Wilson's first taste of directing was making short films, like his award-winning USC effort *RECORDED LIVE*. "When Ron Underwood asked me to direct second unit on *TREMORS*, I caught the bug. Brent and I have written for ten years, and we have had the usual cynical, whiny writers' syndrome of 'nobody does it the way we would have done it.'"

Wilson has gathered a top flight crew to handle the vital visual effects for *AFTERSHOCKS*. Oscar winners Amalgamated Dynamics' Alec Gillis and Tom Woodruff, who created the original Graboids for *TREMORS*, were called in

to design the new creatures, the Shriekers. "They definitely wanted to come back," said Wilson. "They got the old ones out of storage and generated the new ones. Andy Schoneberg ran the Shrieker part of it."

The director had very definite plans in mind for bringing the monsters to life. "I knew from the beginning, when it was decided that I would direct, that I wanted to use puppet animation," said Wilson. "I knew that I didn't want something that could be a person in a suit, and I didn't want something that could be puppeteered. Generally speaking, I don't like the look of puppets. Knowing that I wanted a creature running free across the open desert, I didn't feel that a marionette or rod puppet was the way to do it."

Before the project was even finalized, Wilson contacted animator Phil Tippet, whom Wilson had known since their days together as puppet animators. "Phil liked the idea and on his own generated some test footage that was fundamental in ultimately getting the film off the ground. He did this wonderful scene, not even knowing what the Shriekers looked like, but just a guess based on the script before the Shriekers were even designed. He did this test with





Left: a baby Shrieker, just after being born. Wilson resisted doing "TREMORS IN NEW YORK"—that is, simply putting the same old monsters in a new location—opting instead to make a movie that featured scary small creatures. The original Graboids are also on view. At right, one devours an unsuspecting oil worker.

computer graphics which astonished me because, like Phil, I was kind of dragging my feet in the CGI arena."

Tippet, however, had just finished working on JURASSIC PARK, during which he had changed horses midstream from stop-motion to CGI. "From the time I contacted Phil initially," Wilson continued, "to the time that we actually got the film done, Phil changed over from being a stop-motion animator to a CGI creator. He developed his own proprietary way of creating this new kind of imagery. So it was ironic that, after standing there steadfastly saying I would never accept anything but puppet animation, I ended up with the sort of preeminent puppet animator doing CGI."

There are only about ten CGI shots in the film, but they're pivotal to creating the illusion of life for the Shriekers. "They're the ones showing the creatures full-frame, running along with their feet touching the ground. The rest of the time the creatures are the puppeteers from Amalgamated with full scale-hand puppets. They are wonderfully lifelike and well designed, and they work really well."

The effects crew had two free-standing, cable-controlled hero puppets, those that included all the creature functions. Rounding out the Shrieker army were three fully articulated hand puppets. "Those five puppets served as our whole army of Shriekers with the exception of the few critical Phil Tippet shots."

The Graboids were built to scale, but since only about a third of the giant creatures are seen above ground, the full scale puppets were eight feet high and six feet across at the base, which tapers up to a nasty

beak with a four part mouth that Gillis and Woodruff had designed for the first picture.

"We were able to do something in this picture that we were never quite able to pull off in the first," Wilson explained. "We had mechanisms to push the creature up out of the ground when it would burst through a skin of dirt. It never worked very well in the first picture, but we were able to cut around it." For the answer, Wilson turned to mechanical effects supervisor Peter Chesney, who had just come off WATERWORLD. "One of the things that I told Peter was that I really, desperately wanted this thing twice in the movie to come really roaring up out of the ground pushing the dirt aside. He tackled that problem and solved it beautifully. So we have two shots in the first half of the movie where a full-scale, eight-foot-high thing comes blasting up out of the ground making a grab for somebody."

An uncharacteristically verdant season in Valencia, California, compelled a change in the setting of the story. "The particular

location that we chose," said Wilson, "happened to be extraordinarily green—the greenest it had been in 25 years, according to various crew members who had worked the area for years. So we changed the setting: we said the monsters don't have to live in the desert; they can live under green rolling hills as well. So the beginning of the movie, instead of being in the desert, is in these green rolling hills of Mexico. Ivo Cristante, the production designer, fell in love with that idea and created all these wonderful sets. We built everything on location, interior and exterior sets. He gave them this nice Mexican flair."

Because Wilson had prior experience with action scenes, the real problem he faced as a first-time director was interfacing with his cast. "That was somewhat more intimidating," he said, "than the big action scenes, at least this time out. I now feel highly confident in that area, partly because I had such a wonderful cast. Fred Ward, Helen Shaver, Michael Gross, and Christopher Gartin were just fabulous. As a first-time director I couldn't have had a better group of people."

"There is a love scene in the movie between Fred Ward and Helen Shaver which was, for me, the toughest thing to tackle. That was a day when I was grateful for their years of experience, because it was something I wanted to work. I wanted this little soft moment in the middle of this movie, in the middle of all this scary action. I wanted a genuine connection between these two people. That was the scene that worried me the most, but it came out quite well, and it's sort of whimsical." □

Helen Shaver (far left) and Christopher Gartin (far right) join returning TREMORS stars Fred Ward and Michael Gross (left and right center).





## TOY STORY Whose Voice Was That?

By Michael Lyons

In TOY STORY, Tom Hanks joins the long list of celebrities who have lent their voices to animated films. In fact, TOY STORY features what could be considered an all-star cast: Tim Allen, Annie Potts, Wallace Shawn, and Don Rickles.

Bonnie Arnold, one of the film's producers, says the actors had tremendous influence over their animated counterparts. "How they read helped the characters to evolve," she said. "Initially, the character of Slinky was a little bit different, but as soon as we had Jim [Varney] do a recording, Slinky become more of a hound dog, which fits Jim's voice." Regarding the inspired casting of putdown pundit Rickles, Arnold laughed, "If Don holds Mr. Potato Head next to him, the likeness is incredible!"

Recently, it seems Toontown has been casting from the same A-list as live-action films. A voice, after all, is a defining factor of a character. "It can suggest many things to the animator and designer, visually," said noted animator and historian, John Canemaker. "There may be nuances in the voice that you hadn't thought of." Disney animator Andreas Deja said, "If you just have a good voice, you can still animate that poorly. It's not just one actor who gives a performance; it's half

**"If Don holds Mr. Potato Head next to him, the likeness is incredible!" said producer Bonnie Arnold.**



Woody (above) is voiced by two-time Oscar winner Tom Hanks (inset), one of many stars who have spoken the lines for a Disney animated character.

and half." Deja had an opportunity to apply this fifty-fifty approach in 1994's THE LION KING. The voice of Jeremy Irons as Scar proved to be a great inspiration: "The way he would shape those words—it's unexpected and very imaginative, and you close your eyes and just want to animate right now."

This relationship between animator and actor has led studios to see the marquee value of a famous voice. It was Disney, however, who merged celebrity voices with animation more often and better than anyone else. Roy Rogers and Bing Crosby narrated sections of MELODY TIME (1948) and ICHABOD AND MISTER TOAD (1949) respectively. In 1951's ALICE IN WONDERLAND well-known personalities were used for actual characters: Ed Wynn as the Mad Hatter and Jerry Colona as the March Hare. These talented comedians did plenty of ad libbing, which is evident in the frenetic "unbirthday" scene. Also for the first time, Disney characters took on some of the physical attributes of the actors. The Hare was given Colona's wild eyes and bushy brows, and the Hatter is basically a caricature of Wynn.

In LADY AND THE TRAMP (1955), singer Peggy Lee co-wrote the songs and provided not one but four voices: Lady's owner, the two mischievous Siamese cats, and Peg, queen pooch of the city pound.

Twelve years later, THE

JUNGLE BOOK, for the first time in Disney history, featured celebrity voices for almost all the characters: Sebastian Cabot as Bagheera the panther; suave George Sanders as Shere Khan the tiger; jazz singer Louie Prima as King Louie the ape, Sterling Holloway as Kaa the snake, and of course, Phil Harris as the bear, Baloo.

JUNGLE BOOK began a three-film affair with Harris, who went on to 1970's THE ARISTOCATS and 1973's ROBIN HOOD. His work on JUNGLE BOOK provided great inspiration for the animators. According to John Canemaker, Baloo was originally planned as a cameo, but after the animators heard Harris' recording, Baloo was bumped up to supporting player. "Harris' voice is very warm and jovial," noted Canemaker, "so while the bear doesn't look like him, the animators used the recognizable quality audiences knew from his voice and built on that."

In subsequent years, not an animated feature was made at Disney without at least one famous voice: Roger Miller in ROBIN HOOD, Bob Newhart in THE RESCUERS, Vincent Price in THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE, Buddy Hackett in THE LITTLE MERMAID, and Angela Lansbury in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

With ALADDIN, however, Disney pulled out true star power with Robin Williams as the Genie. The character was a beautiful



merger of voice and animation (the latter by Eric Goldberg), but Andreas Deja, supervising animator for Jafar, feels a little too much emphasis was placed on the voice. "There was so much hype about Robin Williams and his ingenious performance, which it surely is," he said. "There was talk about trying to get an Academy Award nomination, and I kept saying, 'It's only half the battle!' If Eric wasn't there to do this wonderful, imaginative animation, it would have been just a Robin Williams radio show."

Goldberg echoed this sentiment when speaking of the voice talents in POCAHONTAS, which he co-directed. Mel Gibson, Irene Bedard, Judy Kuhn, Linda Hunt, and David Ogden Stiers all made "a huge, huge contribution to the characters," said Goldberg. "I will say, though, with all major bowing and scraping and respect to our voice talent, that perhaps the tone is somewhat different in POCAHONTAS, because there are many sequences played out in pantomime, many sequences played out with a certain amount of subtlety in the draftsmanship and the staging, which comes from the artists' perception of how the character acts and moves and not necessarily from the voice alone."

Disney's use of recognizable





## CGI goes from supporting player to lead.

actors has caused competing studios to follow suit (remember 1968's *YELLOW SUBMARINE*?). Disney wasn't even the first to nab Robin Williams, who can be heard in 20th Century Fox's *FERN-GULLY: THE LAST RAIN FOREST* (1992). Amblimation coaxed Jimmy Stewart out of retirement for *AN AMERICAN TAIL: FEIVEL GOES WEST* (1991). Disney ex-patriate Don Bluth used Martin Short (*THE PEBBLE AND THE PENGUIN*), Burt Reynolds (*ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN*), Dom DeLuise, (almost every Bluth film) and even Phil Harris for 1992's *ROCK-A-DOODLE*.

Rich Animation also realized that celebrity voices would add to their 1994 feature, *THE SWAN PRINCESS*. For the villain, the studio enlisted Jack Palance. Director Richard Rich said, "We videotaped his recording sessions and then printed out all his expressions [on a] board that the animators could use." Rich even incorporated Palance's Academy Award show one-armed push-up into one scene. "For the people who saw the show, that gets a huge laugh. If they don't know much about Jack Palance, then it's just a funny thing to have the villain do. It works either way."

Though many have argued that a familiar voice overshadows the character, John Canemaker feels otherwise. "Perhaps it adds to the character," he said. "The animators use the voice as a basis for recognizability, which adds to the audiences' enjoyment." And, as the trend continues (with Kevin Kline, Demi Moore, and Tom Hulse in *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*), audiences will continue to play "name that toon." □

Tim Allen's blustering baritone (below) enhances Buzz Lightyear's delusion that he's no toy (right).



### TOY STORY

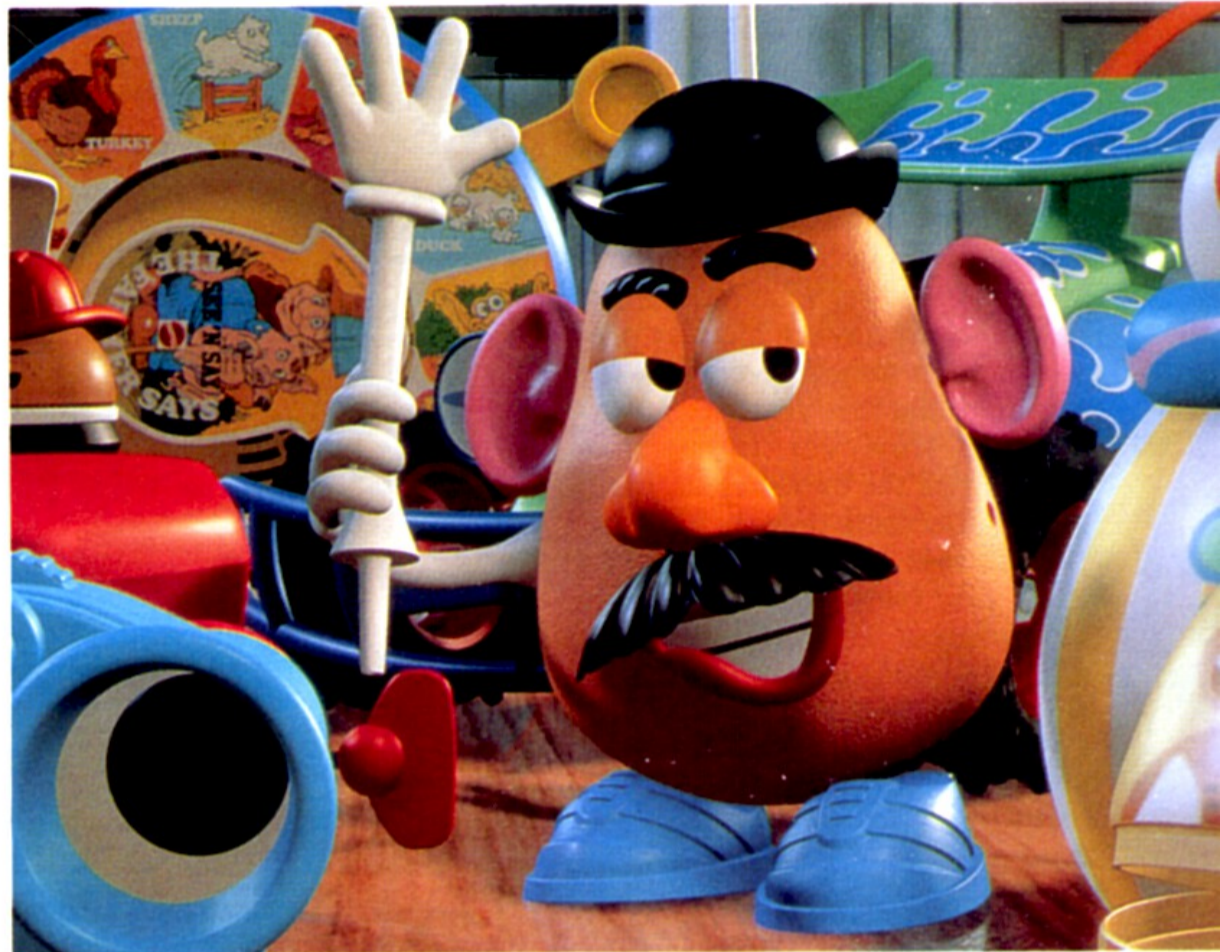
A Buena Vista release of a Walt Disney Pictures presentation of a Pixar production. Producers: Ralph Guggenheim & Bonnie Arnold. Executive producers: Edwin Catmull & Steven Jobs. Director: John Lasseter. Editor: Robert Gordon & Lee Unkrich. Music: Randy Newman. Art director: Ralph Eggleston. Supervising animator: Peter Docter. Screenplay by Joss Whedon, Andrew Stanton, Joel Cohen & Alec Sokolow. 11/95, 80 mins.

Voices:  
 Woody.....Tom Hanks  
 Buzz Lightyear.....Tim Allen  
 Mr. Potato Head.....Don Rickles  
 Slinky Dog.....Jim Varney  
 Rex.....Wallace Shawn

by Michael Lyons

After years of providing special effects, supplementing hand drawings, and suffering from rumors that it was taking over the world, computer animation gets the whole show in *TOY STORY*, and what a show it is! The co-venture between Disney and Pixar is the first computer animated feature, but it's also a whole lot more. *TOY STORY* is chock full of wonderful character animation and stunning visual images, all wrapped up in a hilarious, crowd-pleasing package.

The story of two rival toys, cowboy Woody and action figure Buzz Lightyear, serves as the centerpiece for this off-kilter buddies movie. Wisely, *TOY STORY*'s creators chose not to focus on these two characters but also to pepper the film with eccentric supporting players: Rex, the neurotic T-Rex doll; Hamm, the "pig headed" piggy bank; and Little Bo Peep, who serves as a lamp stand figurine and Woody's love interest. The film also features some well known "toy celebrities," including Slinky Dog, Etch-A-Sketch, Barrel Full of Monkeys, Magic Eight Ball, little green Army Men, and *TOY STORY*'s



Mr. Potato Head, one of *TOY STORY*'s many memorable supporting players.

scene stealer, Mr. Potato Head.

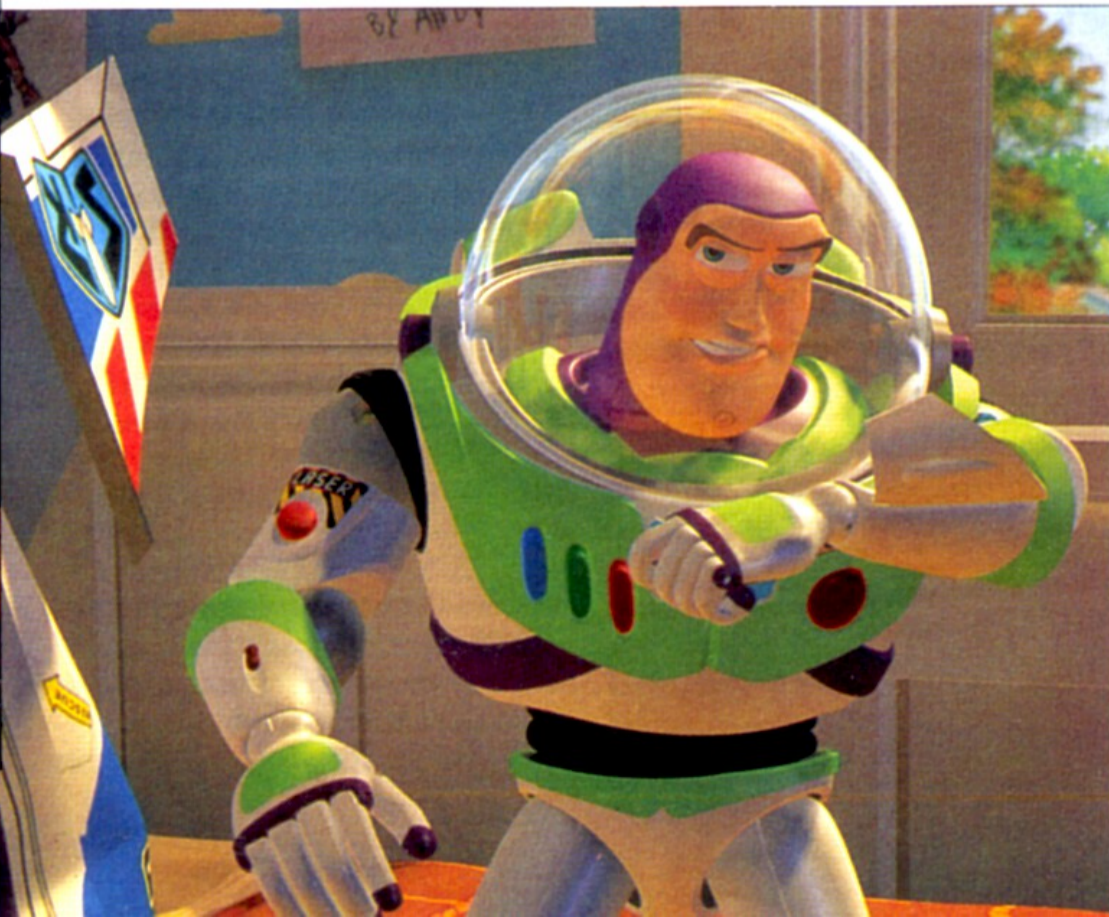
Don Rickles provides the voice of the latter, changing everyone's favorite plaything into a curmudgeonly old man. The other voice talents add similar depth to their roles. In an ingenious move, the animators chose not to fashion the characters around the physical attributes of the actors but around their performances. Woody's wholesome hero personality comes from Tom Hanks' earnest vocal performance, and Buzz's hilarious belief that he is not a toy but a real "Space Ranger" is made all the funnier by Tim Allen's blustering baritone voice.

Music also plays a large part in

helping the story of Woody and Buzz to progress. Unlike the more traditional Broadway-style Disney animated features, *TOY STORY* features three songs by Randy Newman. In most instances, this might seem intrusive, but Mr. Newman has fashioned the songs as part of the story, making the numbers all the more likable.

Director John Lasseter and his crew have used technology to create some ingenious and startlingly realistic set pieces, such as the dark, black-lit bedroom of the film's villain Sid, the neighborhood's evil, "toy-torturing kid." The computers are also used to accentuate some amazing details—minute facial expressions, the fluorescent glint off of Woody's plastic face, and the sunlight shining through Buzz's helmet—and to create a chase scene climax that is downright exhilarating.

*TOY STORY* is not technology; there is a tremendous heart behind the plot, and director Lasseter isn't afraid to slow down at times to let the characters emerge as distinct personalities (Buzz's discovery that he is, in fact, a toy is especially poignant). In all, this is as much a landmark of animation and filmmaking as *SNOW WHITE* and *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT*. Like those films, *TOY STORY* merges technology with an art form to create an unforgettable movie. □





## CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

## IN WITH THE NEW

*It was a year of fine family fantasies and great debuts.*

There is an unfortunate tradition to year-end cinematic summations: critics seem to feel obligated to proclaim the "low quality" of each year's output, as if it were an occupational necessity. From our late perspective, with most other publications having already presented their annual overview, it's apparent that this year was no exception. However, rather than jumping on the bandwagon, I will offer a dissenting opinion by pointing out that 1995 was actually a great year for *cinéfantastique*. In fact, whereas previous years necessitated some juggling in order to fill the ten best list, this year will take a little cheating to squeeze in all the worthy efforts.

### THE BEST

1. **BABE** in many ways sums up the year: an excellent—in fact, nearly perfect—fantasy film from a director, Chris Noonan, making his debut. Not only is the story (scripted by Noonan and producer George Miller) consistently charming, but the production itself is endlessly inventive, filled to the brim with entertaining little touches that don't necessarily advance the story but do enhance the viewing experience (e.g. the delightful trio of singing mice—which on paper must have looked dubious at best). The use of live-action and special effects, as opposed to the animation one would expect in a film like this, increases the amazement level by contrasting the normal world of Farmer Hogget (James Cromwell) with the fantasy world of the animals, in which



A year ago, who would have thought we would be singing the highest praise of 1995 to a film about a talking pig? **BABE** wins as last year's best fantasy.

Babe and his compatriots converse in perfect English. Strangely, this film had this year's most convincing, understandable, and relatable characters, even though most of them were animals. Additionally, the whimsy is underlined by an effectively disturbing subtext: the threat of the slaughter house is always there, rather like the threat of electro-shock therapy and lobotomies in **ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST**. The result is a film that is truly moving, rather than merely fanciful, and destined to take its place as a classic.

2. The best thing to be said about **SEVEN** is that the serial killer sub-genre should be retired for at least a decade (as the release of **COPY-**

**CAT** later in the year seemed to confirm). In the format of a police-procedural, buddy-cop, mystery-thriller, writer Andrew Kevin Walker and director David Fincher convey a truly horrifying world view, in which the actions of John Doe (Kevin Spacey) seem to be the inevitable and logical consequence. The result really can be considered horror on a cosmic level, and I'll even make a real stretch by comparing it to Lovecraft—in the sense that, beyond the slimy monsters and horrors from beyond the spheres, his fiction worked by stripping away the comforting belief systems which protect our psyches from the world around us, exposing a view of the world in which dark and troubling things were the most profound reality, and the only victories were a temporary staving off of the revealed horror. At the same time, **SEVEN** amazingly refuses to give in to cheap cynicism but finds some kind of nobility—not in naive faith but in refusing to give up even in the face of all its horrifying revelations. As Detective Somerset (Morgan Freeman) quotes at the end, "Ernest Hemingway wrote, 'The world is a fine place, and worth fighting for.' I believe the second part."

3. **THE SECRET OF ROAN INISH** was rather an exception to this year's trend, coming from an old hand at the genre, writer-director John Sayles, who long ago provided solid scripts for low-budget

horrors like **THE HOWLING** and **ALLIGATOR**. But he's been away from the genre so long that he returns with the freshness of a newcomer, and **ROAN INISH** has little in common with his earlier work—except, perhaps, the emphasis on the reality of the characters' lives amidst the fantasy. In this case, the realistic drama takes center stage, with the supernatural element introduced mostly through family folk tales told by Hugh Connelly (Mick Lally) to his grand daughter Fiona (Jeni Courtney). If **BABE** had disturbing undertones (implied but kept well off-screen), **ROAN INISH** is grounded in a rugged reality of harsh life on the fishing coasts of Ireland. Still, the film's conclusion definitely seems to confirm the tall tales that have been told, and things end satisfactorily—not through the intervention of magic, but because the characters have come to accept the magic and have acted on that belief, earning their happy ending through their own hard work.

4. This slot really belongs to **A LITTLE PRINCESS**, directed by newcomer Alfonso Cuarón, yet another wonderful family fantasy that shows how telling tales and believing in magic can see one through bitter times and lead to triumph. However, because Warners bun-

**THE SECRET OF ROAN INISH** takes the show position—a children's fantasy grounded in reality.



**SEVEN** takes the place position for being last year's most horrific thriller.





gled the theatrical release so badly that the film went almost immediately to home media (where it appears on Dennis Fischer's Top 10 Laserdisc column), I'll award this spot to another deserving film, **TWELVE MONKEYS**. This is not a must-see film; it's a must-see-twice film. In my initial review, I called it "challenging and difficult," but a subsequent viewing revealed its pleasures even more clearly. The initial problem is not with the film but with the viewing; that is, the belief that a certain interpretation will reveal the truth—i.e., is Cole (Bruce Willis) really a time traveler or just a madman? Actually, the film resists such reductive analysis; neither interpretation will completely explain the narrative. Instead, one must surrender to the subjective experience of the flow of events, just as Cole does, and accept the dream-like logic of events as they unfold. Although this may sound as if the film is floating in limbo, strong performances by Willis, Madeleine Stowe, Brad Pitt, Frank Gorshin, Christopher Plummer, and David Morse ultimately involve the audience, even if some of the characters are bit too loony to invite complete identification. This film also captures a much better sense of the coming millennium than the overwrought and ultimately self-destructive **STRANGE DAYS**.

5. 1995 saw at least three great animated features. Because **BALTO** got the least attention, and deserved to be much more than just an "also-ran," I'll award it the highest slot. A more solid justification is that, of the three, it is the most interesting character study, focusing on the titular Balto (voiced by Kevin Bacon), who is half-dog and half-wolf and thus really neither one nor the other. There is a great tradition of characters who suffer an identity crisis because of conflicting heritages (Mr. Spock being a good example), and this film develops the theme for all its worth, in the context of an exciting action-adventure storyline. Especially praise-worthy is the fact that, despite the presence of an obvious villain, Balto's real triumph is not defeating his personal antagonist but successfully carrying out the mission to deliver medicine to Nome, Alaska. Whereas most films would have contrived a head-to-head confrontation between the rival dogs, Balto conspicuously refuses to allow himself



Terry Gilliam applied his fanciful visual sense to serious science-fiction in **TWELVE MONKEYS**, which proved that difficult subject matter need not be difficult to enjoy.

to be dragged into a fight, even when backed against the wall. Thanks to director Simon Wells and his screenwriters for not opting for the easy, obvious solution.

6. Amazing computer-generated imagery made **TOY STORY**, the debut feature from Pixar, last year's most visually innovative film. Unlike **JUMANJI**, however, this has more than just colorful effects; these toys really have a story—and a good one. Filled with action, humor, and drama, expressed not just with eye-popping visuals but also with clever dialogue, this script would have been entertaining even if handled in another medium, such as stop-motion. But the computer animation truly adds another dimension, a slightly more sharp-edged, pristine look benefiting the frenetic action on view. My only minor objection is that this technique fails to mark a clear dividing line between the real and the fantasies worlds (unlike **BABE**). Interestingly, the lead character of Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) is just about the most self-centered and reprehensible one on view this year: he seems nice as long as his position is secure, but when it becomes clear that he is no longer the favorite toy, he has no qualms about trying to rid himself of rival Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen). Even his initial attempt to rescue Buzz is self-motivated: he wants to win his way back into the community of toys who no longer trust him. Fortunately, by the end of the film he has mended his ways and learned to accept his former rival as a friend; fortunately, this is not ex-

pressed in a sentimental speech but dramatized in their mutual cooperation during the film's exciting chase scene conclusion.

7. Disney has created so many excellent animated musicals in the last several years that it's hardly a criticism to state that **POCAHONTAS** does not quite live up to the best of its recent predecessors. On the other hand, it *is* in the same league with those greats, and it manages to accomplish this while trying to be something different: a love story inspired by historical incidents. Not only that, the film forgoes the traditional Disney ending (the guy and the gal don't live happily ever after together) yet still makes the conclusion seem dramatically satisfying. The film is also a rousing adventure; for exam-

About the only predictable thing last year was that Disney released a wonderful animated musical. **POCAHONTAS** continued the studio's winning streak.



ple, John Smith (Mel Gibson)'s early rescue of an overboard shipmate during a storm, is a stunning piece of action filmmaking, on par with anything accomplished in live-action this year.

8. In previous years, it has sometimes been so difficult to find ten great genre films that I have resorted to including tangential entries with some genre elements. Under those circumstances, Emir Kustarica's **ARIZONA DREAM** would have occupied this slot—an excellent film, worthy of inclusion. However, its genre element is more a matter of surreal style than fantasy content. With many other strong contenders that are more clearly fantasy oriented, I'm giving this space to **THE PROPHECY**. This directorial debut from **HIGHLANDER**-scripter Gregory Widen was the year's most well-developed horror effort and one of the most original. Having conceived a powerful, mythic premise (of a second war in heaven), Widen dramatized the idea in a coherent Earth-bound story and visualized that story in a satisfying way, even without tons of special effects. The mythic resonance of the archangel Gabriel (Christopher Walken)'s jealous feud with mankind puts to shame last year's lamentable efforts from established horror masters (i.e., Tobe Hooper's **THE MANGLER**, Clive Barker's **LORDS OF ILLUSIONS**). Widen also provides the year's most outrageous sexual kink, when the angel Simon (Eric Stoltz) hides a much-sought-after soul in the body of an underage girl—by kissing her! It's hard to



say what's more surprising: that this shot is in the film or that it went unnoticed in the press. Presumably, the drama was so convincing that viewers accepted the incident as part of the story—i.e., a regrettable but necessary move to thwart the villains. Strong performances from Walken, Stoltz (dispatched too early), Elias Koteas and Virginia Madsen (as the hapless humans caught up in this angelic war), and Viggo Mortensen (as Lucifer, who intervenes on the humans' behalf, for reasons of his own).

9. **IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS** was an excellent excursion into weirdness from John Carpenter, who proved that he still has what it takes to make a great horror film. Michael DeLuca's script bends reality in nightmarish ways, capturing the underlying cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft's fiction better than any official adaptation. The apocalyptic scenario is brought to a logical (perhaps not the right adjective in this context) conclusion dramatically, although the filmmakers' resources aren't quite up to providing an adequately astounding representation visually. (The end of the world as we know it takes place mostly off-screen, and we are left with the self-reflexive sight of Sam Neil's insurance investigator sitting in a theater watching a film entitled **IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS**—clever, but not exactly show-stopping.) An unusual, surreal horror film, admirable for succeeding in most if not all of its aspirations.

10. In retrospect, the tone for the year was set by **TALES FROM THE CRYPT PRESENTS: DEMON KNIGHT**. The film obviously has a pedigree, being based on a popular HBO series in turn based on the well known comics; and it featured a high-powered group of executive producers: Joel Silver, Richard Donner, Robert Zemeckis, Walter Hill. But its director, Ernest Dickerson, and its writing team of Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris and Mark Bishop were untried. Yet they managed to craft a film that was at once old-fashioned and original, a mythic tale of a loner hero (William Sandler) protecting a mystical key from a demon (Billy Zane) who wants to use it to reopen the universe to the forces of darkness. Atmospheric production values and solid cinematic craftsmanship make this a winning entry, even if the film does occasionally stoop to moments of obligato-



In January, **DEMON KNIGHT** set the tone for the rest of the year—a fine horror flick from a director new to the genre who surpassed the established masters.

ry, campy gore more appropriate to the HBO series than to the serious story on view here.

### HONORABLE MENTION

**TALES FROM THE HOOD**, despite a lily-white review in *CFQ* 26:6/27:1, was a good attempt at taking the old Amicus horror anthology format and updating it with elements of the currently fashionable urban black melodrama. Director Rusty Cundieff doesn't have a really strong hand at the mechanics of generating suspense, but he and producer-co-writer Darin Scott do have an interesting sensibility that finds the most horror in everyday life and uses the supernatural more as an instrument of retribution. Lots of thoughtful ideas about race are developed in unexpected ways. Although condemning white bigots in no uncertain terms, the film saves its true ire for blacks who collaborate with them, by either selling out or looking the other way. Not a call to arms but a call to action, this film presents its message more effectively and less stridently than in the recent directorial efforts of Spike Lee (who served as executive producer here).

There were lots of other worthy films on view this year, all of them interesting and entertaining, if not always completely successful in their ambitions. Highly recommended are such little seen items as the double bill of **THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB** and **FRANZ KAFKA'S ITS A WONDERFUL LIFE**, **LEGEND OF ZIPANG**, **THE HUNTED**, **FLUKE**, **THE MYSTERY OF RAMPO**, **SAFE**, **NADJA**, **THE ADDICTION**, **THE KINGDOM**, **THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN**, and **WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**. **THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES** also deserves a mention, but since it was essentially a direct-to-video release in most cities, I'll let John Thonen praise it in his column.

High-tech action-adventure resulted in some popular films that edged into the science-fiction genre, such as **CRIMSON TIDE** and **GOLDENEYE**, both entertaining thrill rides. **WATERWORLD** was exciting, even if stupid. And **SPECIES** showed that monster movies still sell at the box office when they are done half way decently; thank a great ensemble

cast and H. R. Giger's designs, even if the search-and-destroy plot was a tad conventional.

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

**JOHNNY MNEMONIC** was doubly disappointing because it seemed to have everything going for it: a talented sf author (William Gibson) closely involved with the adaptation of his own work and a director (Robert Longo) who seemed genuinely respectful of the material and eager to translate it into something more than the usual dumbed-down Hollywood action flick. Sad to say, the results were near disastrous. Fortunately, amidst the noise and confusion were several great supporting performances that did lend moments of entertainment to this mess: Udo Keir, Ice-T, Henry Rollins, and (surprise!) Dolph Lundgren liven up the proceedings considerably with their scene-stealing and occasionally over-the-top antics.

From the silly jungle chaos of **CONGO**, Ernie Hudson emerges with his dignity intact—unlike the bland leads or the hammy Tim Curry. Somehow, Hudson hits just the right note as the jungle guide, adopting an accent and mannerism one would associate with such a role without every seeming contrived or cliché-ridden.

Sean Young gets what laughs there are in **DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE**. Rather than play the part as an over-the-top psycho-bitch, she embodies the role mostly as a subtly scheming femme fatale, keeping her tongue in her cheek rather than camping it up.

Lastly, Scott Bakula in **LORD OF ILLUSIONS** and Ted Levine in **THE MANGLER** deserve recognition for trying to mold something resembling believable characters in films that otherwise had little use for characterization.

### ACADEMY OF THE OVERRATED

This year's first-ever award (given in honor of a dialogue exchange in Woody Allen's **MANHATTAN**) goes to **STRANGE DAYS**, a competent enough futuristic action-thriller, with some good characterization and performances, that nonetheless bungled its ideas with some outrageous overkill techniques, yet went on to win universal critical accolades ("the sci-fi film of the decade," according to *Sci-Fi Universe* magazine) while bombing at the box office. It was enough to restore one's faith in popular tastes. □



## SOUNDTRAX

by Randall Larson

## A VINTAGE YEAR, enhanced by reissues & restorations.

1995 came and went with few notable new genre film scores released on disc; most of the year's best science fiction, horror and fantasy soundtrack CDs were reissues or restorations of vintage scores, previously unavailable on disc. Still, there were enough notable genre scores to make 1995 a rewarding listening experience for the discriminating soundtrack collector.

### NOW PLAYING

Jerry Goldsmith continues to compose much of Hollywood's most interesting film music, even for films like CONGO (Epic EK 67266). This dismal jungle terror tale never found its grounding, but Goldsmith provided a powerful adventurous score. Rising out of the introductory African music comes Goldsmith's main theme, a heroic, proud motif for brass that captures both the adventure of the scientific undertaking and the naiveté of the characters. Closely related to the main theme is a soft woodwind love theme, delicately suggesting what the film never admitted to about the main characters. As usual, however, it's Goldsmith's action music that shines. Superbly orchestrated and heavily percussive, the music never falls into dissonant disarray, but remains securely organized, and catapults the actions scenes with furious tonality.

The telekinetic thriller POWDER (Hollywood HR 62038-2), benefitted from a highly lyrical score by Goldsmith. Its main theme is one of the composer's loveliest—a passionate melody for winds, strings and piano. The score plays against the weirdness of its story by emphasizing this haunting beauty; an alternate motif for violin over synth effects harkens back to the composer's early work for TWILIGHT ZONE and FREUD. Both of these are among the year's standout scores—regardless of genre.

James Horner's CASPER (MCA 11240) is a tour-de-force of mischievous music. The impish ghost trio is accentuated with fast-chanted female vocalisms and fast-paced orchestration. In some places it sounds almost like Big Band meets Beetlejuice with an air of otherworldly wonder and eerie theremin-like synch crescen-

dos—but Horner makes it all work very effectively and the result is a very likable large orchestral score. It's varied and constantly interesting, which reaffirms Horner's talent as a powerful, resourceful film composer.

WATERWORLD featured a notable score by James Newton Howard (MCA MCAD 11282), relying on a wealth of exotic wind and percussion instruments to lay an effective primitiveness to the film's musical sound design. Embellished by a huge orchestra and choir, the music is action-oriented. In contrast is a pretty theme for flute over mysterious electronics, associated with the child central to the film's plot. Howard's collection of powerful themes and deft instrumentation give this score a memorable unity and depth.

Randy Newman scored with his likable and energetic music for TOY STORY (Walt Disney 60883-7). Newman draws on every Hollywood cliché to create an over-the-top score which perfectly supported the toys' adventure in Andy's bedroom: cartoon music, punctuated by dazzling crescendos, humorous scherzos and potent action music. Newman's music is delightful on disc, if you can keep up with its dizzying pace.

Patrick Doyle composed a magnificent symphonic horror score with MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN. The CD (Epic

EK 66631) contains nearly 70 minutes of music. It's classical film music as much as it is classical horror music, even while eschewing obligatory "horror" effects. Doyle's symphonics surge and crash; his delicate chamber piece enhances situations and character, and his accomplished orchestral sensibilities result in an intelligent and expansive composition.

Former orchestrator Mark McKenzie provided an excellent score for DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE (Intrada MAF 7063d). McKenzie's music for this modernized variation of a gender-crossing Jekyll & Hyde is at times full of warmth and majesty, other times replete with roguishness, grand and sweeping, epic in tonality and breadth. The result is a superior orchestral score of great power and depth that stands up superbly on its own—which few horror scores do these days.

### FROM THE VAULTS

As noted, most of this year's best soundtrack CDs were reissues, restorations or first releases of sought-after scores not previously available. After 20 years, Colin Towns' outstanding electronic score for FULL CIRCLE (THE HAUNTING OF JULIA in the USA)—elusive enough on its original British LP—appeared on CD (Koch 3-870302H1). Alternately melancholy and exhilarating, Towns' paradoxical score imbued the film with an unhappy

Jerry Goldsmith continues to compose much of Hollywood's most interesting film music, even if it's for films like CONGO, a dismal jungle terror tale.



James Newton Howard used exotic instruments, orchestra, and choir to achieve WATERWORLD's score.

joy. Superbly performed by synths and piano which provided a clear-toned and somewhat eerie texture, Towns' captivating music provided meaning, mood and melody to this rather oblique ghost story.

A premiere recording of Bernard Herrmann's masterful score for FAHRENHEIT 451 from the Seattle Symphony (conducted by film composer Joel McNeely, Varese Sarabande VSD-5551) offers a refreshing glimpse at an underrated score. A 10-minute suite was recorded by the composer in 1974; this extended recording provides nearly 15 minutes—including five additional cues—hitherto unavailable. The music is delicate, providing color for the murky grey world depicted in the Bradbury sociological science fiction story. The author's themes are most strongly echoed in the contrast between the Prelude (introducing the main theme) and "Fire Engine," which sums up the automatic mechanisms of this repressed society in its unemotional rhythm and drive. The CD contains selections from five films, of which FAHRENHEIT 451 is the longest. A cue from the 1947 fantasy-drama, THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR, is also present (a segment not found on Varese's CD of the full score).

As good as the Herrmann CD was, kudos for the year's most notable retrospective collection



# 1995 IN REVIEW

must go to David Wishart and England's Cloud Nine Records for *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE: The Film Music of Roy Webb* (Cloud Nine CNS 5008). Among the most neglected composers in film music history, RKO's Webb composed the music for dozens of vintage motion pictures, including nearly all of the Val Lewton classics from the 1940s. Seventy-three minutes of original soundtrack material from 13 films have been restored on this CD, from the malevolent Karloff chords of *BEDLAM*, to the surging, brass cries that herald danger in *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, the splendidly swashbuckling *SINBAD THE SAILOR* to the nightmarish moods of *DEATH SHIP* and the charming and mystical music of *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE*—and plenty of mainstream thrillers. Webb shared a penchant for melody, rhythm and furious musical action. It's 50 years overdue, but the CD is very, very welcome for providing for the first time some of the best unrecorded genre music of Hollywood's Golden Age.

From England came a premiere recording of *THE VALLEY OF GWANGI: The Classic Film Music of Jerome Moross* (US edition: Silva America SSD-1049). Moross is another neglected Hollywood composer, known for his work in Westerns such as *THE BIG COUNTRY* and *THE PROUD REBEL*. This penchant made the composer quite appropriate to score the Harryhausen

**Randy Newman provided likable, energetic music and songs which perfectly supported TOY STORY.**



**For MARY SHELLY'S FRANKENSTEIN, Patrick Doyle composed a magnificent score, with delicate pieces that enhance characters and situations.**

dino-Western, *THE VALLEY OF GWANGI*, Moross' only genre score. Paul Bateman and the City of Prague Philharmonic deliver a first-rate performance, which effectively captures all of the score's high points in its 18:44 length. Contrasting a Western-adventure theme for trumpet and strings with a plethora of wild, brass and percussion action motifs, Moross helped breathe life into Ray Harryhausen's wonderful animated scenes.

Close on Moross' heels is *NOT OF THIS EARTH! The Film Music of Ronald Stein* (VARESE SARABANDE VSD-5634). This splendid collection of original soundtrack cues is the '50s indie-movie equivalent of the Roy Webb CD. Ronald Stein was the inventive composer who wrote great scores to Z-grade movies like *ATTACK OF THE 50 FT WOMAN*, *NOT OF THIS EARTH!*, *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*, and *SPIDER BABY*, among others. None of these has ever been released previously, and this disc has more than an hour of terrific horror mayhem music—35 cues from seven movies, with plenty of punch from each film to satisfy the hungriest of drive-in appetites. Stein's music mixes eerie electronics with horrific crescendos, furtive windful suspenses with dramatic melodies and gives drama to films otherwise laughable. One of the CD's best suites is from *THE HORROR*, which makes the most of its small orchestra, each instrument bristling

with life as Stein propels his rhythmic chord progressions to further depths until they reach a magnificent downstroke of sound, a repeated, cavernously low descent of brass, percussion and harp answered by a shrilling higher brass melody as the music swirls rapidly to a close. This is *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* on a shoestring, and just as powerful, dramatically. Most of it is formula stuff, but Stein made it work perfectly, and he never gave any of these films less than a great score, even for something as laughable as *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*—where Stein's music almost makes the appearance of the wobbling cardboard crabs less banal, and gives the film a sense of the dramatic that it couldn't have possibly had without the music. This is archetypal horror/science fiction music from an era long since passed, and it's absolutely wonderful to have it available on disc.

Toho Films gave us the equivalent from Japanese composers. The early Japanese monster movies—the handful of original *Godzilla* and *Ghidrah* and *Mothra* movies from the late '50s and early '60s—contained quite effective symphonic scoring. Excerpts have been available here and there in compilations; 1995, however, saw the first issue of complete scores to such films as *THE H-Man* (MASARU SATOH) and *MATANGO* (Sadao Bekku), all on Japanese CDs. The best of these is Yuji Koseki's bristling,

likable music for *MOTHRA* (SLC SLCS-5064). A superb horror score even by Hollywood's standards, *MOTHRA*'s music is built around a strident string and brass main theme. Three crashing notes, followed by four responding, lower notes, herald the coming of the gigantic moth. A secondary theme is less interesting, consisting of droning organ tonalities. But the score's most memorable motif is certainly the "Mothra" song, sung by the diminutive (in the film) duo, The Peanuts. Their harmonies are perfect and underscored by pounding jungle drums. Koseki provides plenty of dynamic, brassy action cues and exploding cymbal rustlings, dissonant choral and integrated horror motifs that build an effective and memorable sound design for this film.

Our final gratitude must go to Warner Bros. for making available a second volume (five years after the first) of maniacally magnificent cartoon music. *The Carl Stalling Project, Volume 2* (Warner Bros. 9 45430-2), provides more of the composer's astounding music from Warner Bros. cartoons of the '40s and '50s. Favoring bassoons, trombone slides, comic violin glissandos and *mysterioso* effects on the viola, along with a multitude of brief, borrowed snatches of classical or contemporary jazz music for satirical effect—all carefully worked out to fit behind and amidst the endless barrage of sound effects—Carl Stalling gave these cartoons their instantly identifiable flavor. His music created the cohesion that underlay their instantly identifiable flavor. His music created the cohesion that underlay their comic insanity and gave credence to their zany activities, adding punch and pizzazz, pathos and poignancy, power and passion to their preposterousness. Featuring better sound and less dialog and sound effects that the first volume, this volume features sizable excerpts (for cartoon music, three to six minutes) a dozen *Porky Pig*, *Roadrunner*, and *Bugs Bunny* cartoons—plus short cues and segments from 16 more cartoons. Their manic humor, sociological satire, and frequent excursions into wild fantasy, provided Stalling opportunities to compose music of every flavor under the sun. The CD's 75 minutes of original soundtrack music is zany, fast-paced and utterly compelling. □



## DTV

by John Thonen

## HOME VIDEO CHAOS

*Independents barely hang onto dwindling market*

On the surface, 1995's Direct-To-Video arena may not look a lot different from that of prior years. Beneath that surface, however, '95 was hardly business as usual for the independent producers who dominate the DTV marketplace. It was a time of chaos, as those producers struggled to hang on to their share of a dwindling market.

Declining sales due to video stores' increased reliance on theatrical releases, along with a softening of demand for once reliable genres (chiefly horror and exploitation), substantially cut income for DTV producers at a time when the demand for better quality product was driving up production costs. The result of all this has made the selections (hell, the viewing) for this year's column even more difficult and depressing than last year. Still, here goes:

### SCIENCE FICTION'S BEST FILM

The rewards of wading through DTV muck lie in finding the rare diamond in the rough: a film that shows enough promise to deserve greater attention. Such a film is Stephan Norrington's *DEATH MACHINE*. Buried beneath a generic title and video box design, this is one of the most promising debuts in the DTV arena. Even the best DTV entries tend to be derivative and this is no exception—essentially a hybrid of *THE TERMINATOR* and *DIE HARD*. Norrington elevates his film by drawing strong performances from his cast, getting maximum impact from his effects, and then driving it all at a breathless pace to his own hyperkinetic imagery.

Brad Dourif is the only recognizable name, dominating his every scene with his unique portrayal of Dante, an unstable techno-geek who has been allowed to run wild designing weaponry for Chaank, a British armament manufacturer. When some failed experiments on humans attract too much media attention, a trouble-shooting female executive is sent to clean things up. Before long, she and several militant protesters are being pursued through Chaank's high-rise headquarters by Dante's ultimate weapon, the Warbeast.

Norrington pays homage to his heroes through such character names as John Carpenter, Sam



Like many DTV releases, Stephen Norrington's *DEATH MACHINE* is derivative; but his film rises above slavish imitation to stand on its own merits.

Raimi, and Ridley Scott, but the most conspicuous influence is James Cameron. Norrington's assured use of a variety of FX techniques and his action-packed yet somehow anti-military subtext are highly reminiscent of Cameron at his best. The same goes for female lead Ely Pouget's character, who is clearly cast from the mold of Linda Hamilton and Sigourney Weaver. The big difference is that, instead of exhibiting slavish imitation, Norrington's work seems to be the result of heartfelt emulation. Give this guy \$80 million, and I don't think a work comparable to *T2* would be beyond his grasp.

### SCIENCE FICTION'S WORST FILM

Though director Harry Bromley Davenport's original *XTRO* remains a minor gem, his latest entry in the series, *XTRO: WATCH THE SKIES*, achieves only the dubious distinction of being worse

than *XTRO2*. Badly acted, poorly written and directed, cheaply lit and cursed with abysmal sound, the film's only saving grace is David Barton's alien effects. Robert Culp makes a pointless cameo, his presence communicating only his disinterest in the proceedings. If you're a UFO believer, by all means, keep watching the skies, but watch a different movie.

### BEST HORROR FILM

This once-popular genre has taken a beating in theatres and vid stores, but '95 did offer a few entries that managed to be more than just adequate time-killers. The stand-out of these is Jon Jacobs' *THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES*, a low-budget female vampire tale far more deserving of a decent theatrical release than the pretentious *NADJA*. Though resemblances to Fritz Leiber's story of the same title are few, the film creates its own, equally effective

vision. The plot is minimal, as is most of the characterization, but Jacobs achieves an otherworldly yet somehow familiar ambiance to this tale of a woman whose suicide has doomed her to an undead-existence of madness and murder. The Miami Beach milieu is perfectly incorporated in a way that makes it seem a part of the film's vampiric lead, and her a part of it.

This film has already received kudos in *Imagi Movies 3:1*, and there isn't much I can add—except that I still find myself thinking about Christina Fulton's sexy, scary, comical, maniacal turn as the title character. I'm not certain when the last time was that a performance so haunted me. Time will tell if Fulton can manage an equally effective but less eccentric role in a more conventional film, but if this ends up her cinematic swan-song, it will have been a notable one.

### WORST HORROR FILM

The number of horror titles dwindled last year, but the high percentage of bad ones kept this category highly competitive. After much soul-searching, not to mention speed-searching, the decision goes to *THE ICE CREAM MAN*. Though the success of *A-PIX* Entertainment, who released several horror titles in '95, offers hope for a DTV revival of the genre, it's a shame they included this steaming scoop of offal in their product line.

A one-of-a-kind (please!!!) cast of has-beens, including Clint Howard, Sandahl Bergman, Olivia Hussey, David Naughton, Jan Michael Vincent, David Warner, and Steve Garvey (!?) pop-up to collect a paycheck in exchange for their last shreds of dignity. If you're hungry for a humorless horror-spoof about a deranged ice cream vendor with a penchant for kidnapping children, murdering adults, and selling confections topped with roaches and severed body parts, then this is for you. Otherwise, stay away from this tasteless treat.

### BEST SEQUEL

This year's recipient is probably the biggest surprise. *CHILDREN OF THE CORN III: URBAN HARVEST* is most notable for having been spawned by two abysmal progenitors, yet somehow



managing to surpass them to be a pretty good little film on its own terms. After the dumb and dull proceedings of the first two entries, Part III wisely moves away from the isolated Midwest setting. This time, two boys from the accursed town of the originals are adopted by a childless couple in Chicago. The oldest adapts to his new surroundings, but young Eli is eager to continue gathering youthful converts to the gospel of "he who walks between the rows." The film manages some effective horror set pieces thanks to makeup wiz Screaming Mad George. It also manages to offer some likeable characters who actually engage our interest. The whole thing falls apart by the climax, featuring wholesale slaughter at the hands—actually, tentacles or something—of a very ludicrous monster. It also suffers from an ill-defined protagonist, but young Daniel Cerney is very effective as the evil Eli, and for 3/4 of its running time this is a better than average horror tale.

## WORST SEQUEL

Albert Pyun's incomprehensible *NEMESIS 2* wins the dishonors in another highly competitive category. Though *NEMESIS* had some glaring problems, it delivered the sci-fi-action goods. For *N2*, Pyun ditches any real connection to the original, offering us 90 minutes of a killer 'bot from the future pursuing a muscle-bound girl through desolate Utah (standing in for Africa). Pyun forsakes plot, characters, and coherence, in favor of some OK fights, some nifty explosions, and a whole lot of running around. The film could have been shot silent—it would have been just as easy to follow and possibly more interesting.

## BEST OUTLAW MOVIE

"Outlaw Cinema" is my personal designation for those "backyard" productions by fans with little or no experience, working with budgets that range from that of Big Mac up to "epics" in the range of a decent used car. Most "Outlaw" product is awful. Not Andy Milligan awful, not even Ed Wood awful, but just plain unwatchable. Yet here and there, an oasis of talent would appear, and I would again believe that one day an "Outlaw" moviemaker too good to ignore would come to the forefront. With the release of *THE SANDMAN*, director J.R. Bookwalter brings the movement a quantum leap forward and positions himself on the cusp of mainstream respectability.

It may be damning it with faint



Christina Fulton's sexy, scary, comical turn as *THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES* helped earn the film honors as the year's best DTV horror entry.

praise to label *THE SANDMAN* a solid and professional effort, but even the best previous "Outlaw" offerings featured acting, sound, lighting, and camerawork that might most charitably be described as uneven. Bookwalter executes these aspects so solidly that they cease to be an issue. In addition, the producer-director-co-writer, creates some interesting characters and deftly captures the white-trash milieu of their world. *THE SANDMAN*'s biggest fault is that it short-sells its horror aspects by over-concentrating on its quirky characters. Eventually the title being, an evil creature who haunts the nether world between our reality and our dreams, comes to the forefront, and Bookwalter treats us to some exciting confrontations laced with effects that are nothing short of remarkable, considering the budget.

Except for its budgetary limitations, *THE SANDMAN*'s faults are the same as in, say, *SPECIES*, a similarly fun but flawed work: script structure, character emphasis, and story concept and execution. These keep *SANDMAN* from being the neo-classic it might have been, but they can't negate the clever dialogue, solid, performances, and slick editing. Bookwalter has redefined outlaw filmmaking and, in so doing, has driven himself outside of its realm. Soon,

he'll be battling with the big-boys of DTV.

## WORST OUTLAW MOVIE

As you may have gathered, there is no shortage of bad "Outlaw" movies. Since the resources of these grassroots moviemakers are so meager, the criteria to judge them becomes a little difficult. So, rather than zap some headbanger who stole 20 bucks from his mom's purse and made a movie last weekend, I'll upset somebody who has been at this long enough to be doing better.

Don Farmer has been making "Outlaw" movies for nearly a decade now, and his latest *RED LIPS*, is really no improvement over his early epics like *DEMON QUEEN* and *VAMPIRE COP*. Farmer apparently had a little bit of money this time, since he hired scream queen emeritus Michelle Bauer (could this be the real reason behind her retirement?), but outside of a pretty good-looking video box, the only reason to pick up this lesbian vampire tale would be the copious amounts of nudity. Still, even for the terminally horny, the average Fred Olen Ray film offers just as many bared breasts; plus they're actually in focus.

## BEST CHARLES BAND FILM

For better or worse, Band's

product has generally dominated this column, but in 1995 his brilliantly marketed Full Moon Home Video spent most of the year in eclipse, after being unceremoniously dumped by distributor Paramount. Still, Band remains a seminal figure in DTV, and his revival, through the self-distributed Full Moon label, gives evidence that he has more lives than Jason.

Band's first self-released title was *CASTLE FREAK*, a film that boasted the return of Stuart Gordon to hard-edged horror, reteaming with *RE-ANIMATOR* principals Jeffrey Combs and Barbara Crampton. Though the final results fall below expectations for such a promising enterprise, it's a solid and generally enjoyable entry that easily overpowers the rest of Band's lackluster '95 releases.

The film's strengths lie in Jonathan Fuller's strong turn as the title creature (a man imprisoned and tortured by his deranged mother since childhood), Optic Nerve's impressive full-body suit visualization of the ravages of such a life, and a dark, pervasive atmosphere that drives the story inexorably toward a tragic ending. Unfortunately, the flaws often overpower the merits. Crampton and Combs give one-note performances that seem weakly directed, and the story is packed with subplots that are never concluded. Though far from failing totally, Gordon has not equaled his earlier gems, let alone surpassed them.

## CHARLES BAND'S WORST FILM

Barely more than a year ago Band's biz' looked to be booming. Then came near-disaster, and the *JOSH KIRBY... TIME WARRIOR!* series, which was to consist of six films, shot in a serial-styled approach, ended up with a completion bond company. The first two were finally released late in the year, sans Full Moon copyright. *PLANET OF THE DINO-KNIGHTS* is a relatively enjoyable kick-off for the family-oriented series. Unfortunately, in *THE HUMAN PETS*, the ball fumbles when Kirby and his companions time-hop into the future, which seems overrun by gigantic aliens who pick up the time travelers as pets for their equally gargantuan brat child. Offering minimal and inadequately executed effects, along with a pace too lethargic for even the Barney crowd, *HUMAN PETS* rates as one of the dullest and least interesting films Band has ever put before the public. □



## LASERBLAST

by Dennis Fischer

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Classics compensate for dearth of great recent titles.

As 1994 wasn't one of the better years for movies, there weren't many good new titles to be made into laserdiscs in '95. Nevertheless, discs are catching up to many classics and offering some superb remasterings and special editions. Here's an accounting of the best new titles and reissues of last year:

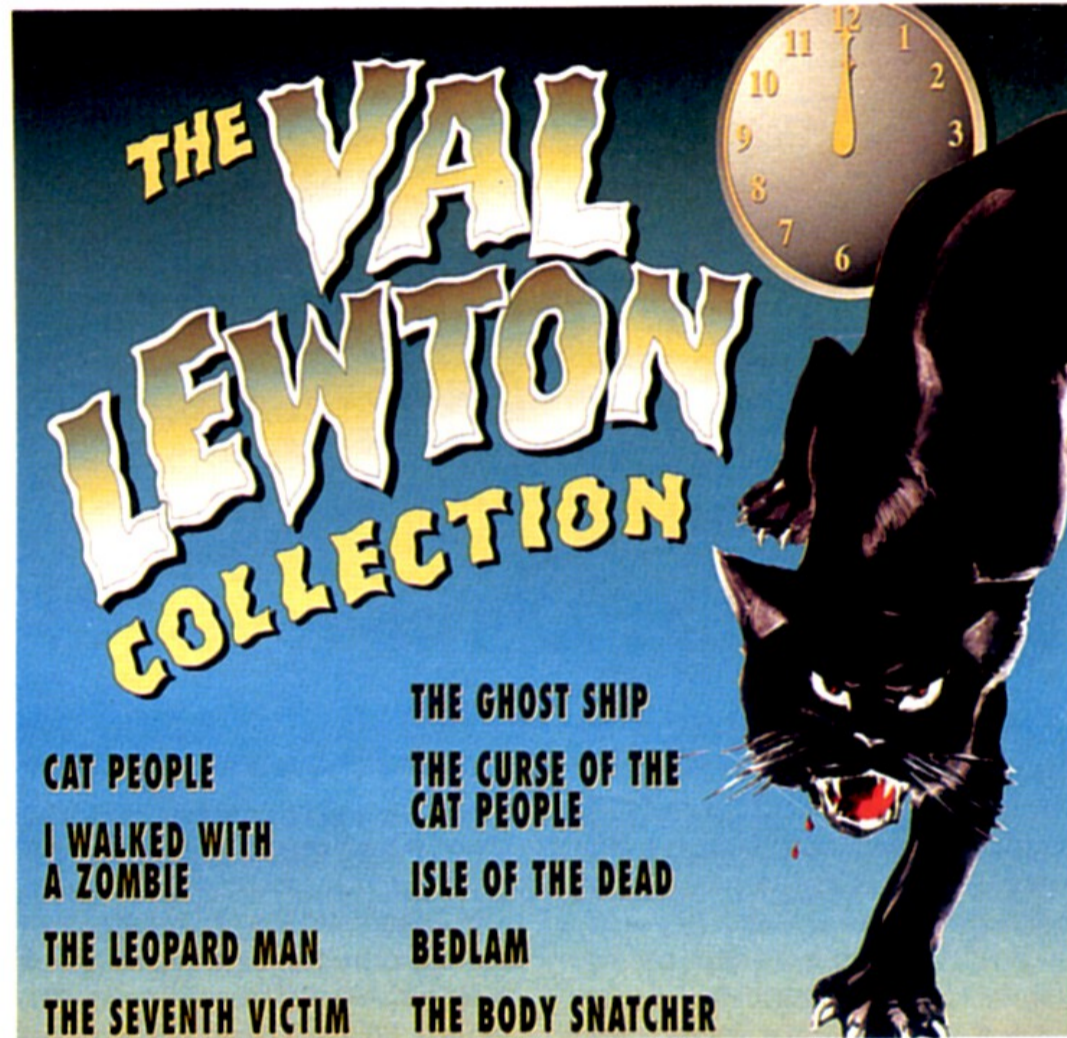
### NEW RELEASES

1. **THE VAL LEWTON COLLECTION** (Turner Home Video/Image Entertainment). Though many of these titles were issued on long out-of-print laser editions, this is a complete collection of all nine Lewton horror titles, including the never-before-released *GHOST SHIP*, all from 35mm prints. (See *CFQ* 27:6 for details.)

2. **THE INNOCENTS** (20th Century-Fox) is the most subtle, ambiguous ghost tale ever. With an intelligent script by Truman Capote, William Archibald, and John Mortimer, Jack Clayton directed a brilliant adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. The beauty of the Cinemascope compositions, some of the most atmospheric photography in Freddie Francis' career, has been preserved on this widescreen disc, and Deborah Kerr gives a *tour de force* as the haunted governess. Truly a cinematic classic.

3. **THE LION KING** (Disney Home Video/Image Entertainment). The animation is extremely accomplished, and storyline is full of colorful action and characters (particularly Rowan Atkinson's Zazu, the king's perpetually petulant avian adviser). With a message of accepting responsibility that is demonstrated through the story rather than laid on with a trowel, *LION KING* deserves a place among Disney classics. It's nicely letterboxed (at 1.85), a bonus not offered on videocassette.

4. **H.P. LOVECRAFT'S RE-ANIMATOR** (Elite Entertainment) presents Stuart Gordon's debut in a special letterboxed edition that also features footage used to create the R-rated and TV editions. Additionally, it has commentary from Gordon and producer Brian Yuzna. Ten years later, it certainly deserves its acclaim as one of the funniest gore-fests of the '80s.



The Val Lewton Collection, which assembles the producer's nine B-movie horror classics from the '40s, is this year's most important laserdisc release.

5. **A LITTLE PRINCESS** (Warner Bros.) is a beautiful adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel about a rich young girl who is reduced to servant when her father is lost in WWI. The film is a magical fantasy, not only in the CGI representations of tales she tells of a prince fighting a 10-headed monster, but in her everyday life when a wish she makes mysterious comes true. A delightful and touching film.

6. **MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE/ISLAND OF LOST SOULS** (MCA) is a wonderful double disc of two of the liveliest horror fests from the '30s. (See *CFQ* 27:6 for details.)

7. **REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (Columbia/TriStar) is the second in the Hammer series and one of the best. The color is slightly desaturated on this otherwise fine print. The film is a bit talky, but it's good talk, with fine performances and intriguing moral ambiguities.

8. **INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE** (Warner Bros.) has taken lumps for not following Anne Rice closely enough, and (as Bram Stoker demonstrated in *Dracula*) it is easier to maintain a vampire as a

mysterious, powerful figure of evil if he is caught only in intriguing glimpses, which isn't possible with the main characters of a story. On the plus side, this is one of the most sumptuous vampire films ever made, with some magical touches (a statue briefly coming to life as Louis gains his vampiric senses) and tributes (the grand guignol Theatre des Vampyres). Viewed objectively, this \$34-million production is not the most inventive vampire feature, but in terms of visual delights, it ranks high indeed.

9. **THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME** (Roan Group) is an often overlooked classic that has inspired countless imitations. Much of the print here has been restored to its original splendor (subsequent releases were darkened to obscure details like the severed heads in Count Zaroff's trophy room), though some shots remain grainy. Leslie Banks is delightful as the mad Russian who hunts human prey, and Joel McCrea gives hints of the qualities that would make him a fine leading man. The project, directed by *KING KONG*'s Ernest B. Schoedsack, uses some of the same jungle glass shots and sets. This disc features trailers for *KONG*

and *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, footage from Willis O'Brien's never completed *CREATION*, and a reproduction of the original press-book. *Making of KING KONG* author George Turner provides informative production notes and a rather rambling commentary which should have been tightened.

10. **REPULSION** (Criterion) is a seminal horror film that seriously examines schizophrenia from the schizophrenic's point of view, with Catherine Deneuve brilliantly portraying a woman whose sexual repression and repulsion drive her to murder. A pristine print is presented in 1.75 aspect ratio, with half the film in CAV, and director Roman Polanski and Deneuve offer occasionally insightful alternate track commentary as well. Also, Polanski's earliest short films, *TWO MEN AND A WARDROBE*, *THE FAT AND THE LEAN*, and *MAMMALS* are included.

### REISSUES

1. **THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW 20th Anniversary Edition** (Fox Video) has everything a fan could want. At heart a mediocre spoof, the film is nevertheless an endlessly repeatable experience thanks to Richard O'Brien's camp dialogue and toe-tapping tunes, plus Jim Sharman's *mise-en-scene* which crams *objets d'art* in every frame. The film has finally been letterboxed and offers deleted footage, the original British ending, trailers, and a recording of audience responses to help replicate the theatrical experience at home.

2. **THIEF OF BAGDAD** (Pioneer Special Edition), one of the greatest fantasy films of all time, has long been out of print. Not to worry, this three-strip Technicolor restoration is far better than the earlier Embassy release. The film is resplendent with delights: Oscar-winning photography by Georges Périnal and Osmond Borradaile, wondrous designs by William Cameron Menzies, a script capturing the best qualities of fairy tales, and a classic score by Miklós Rózsa. Conrad Veidt became the template for all future evil viziers; Rex Ingram makes for an unforgettable genie; and Sabu delights by simply playing his guileless self.



## Bond is back!

3. **JAWS: Limited Edition Signature Collection** (MCA) is still one of the most effective shockers ever. This special CAV edition features a spectacular two-hour documentary on the making of the film, 1995 interviews with Steven Spielberg and cast and crew members, plus John Williams' score isolated on the analog tracks, a CD soundtrack, outtakes, home movies, and more.

4. **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** (20th Century-Fox) has been remastered for this new edition and coupled with a documentary, featuring interviews with Robert Wise, Patricia O'Neal, and the late Julian Blaustein. There is commentary on an analog track as Nicholas Meyer questions Wise. The deluxe edition, autographed by Wise, also features a gold CD of Bernard Herrmann's terrific score, plus a book of Wise on his films.

5. **SLAUGHTERHOUSE-5** (MCA), one of the best science fiction films of the '70s, is presented in a new letterboxed disc with the theatrical trailer. Michael Sachs is exceptionally naturalistic as passive protagonist Billy Pilgrim; Valerie Perrine is appropriately pulchritudinous; and Ron Liebman is an effective psychotic. Director George Roy Hill and scripter Stephen Geller retain the splintered narrative of Kurt Vonnegut's novel, which jumps from present to past to future, thereby allowing the viewer to make the mental connections that Pilgrim does.

6. **ROBOCOP** (Criterion) is presented in CAV with a 1.75 aspect ratio and commentary by Paul Verhoeven, Michael Miner, and Jon Davison. The satiric original retains its bite in a way that the lame sequels do not, but the additional footage (mere seconds trimmed for an R rating) does not significantly alter the film. The disc ends bizarrely with the entire movie played speeded up with different pieces spread out on a dozen mini-screens over a two minute period. Still, this is an intelligent classic, and those who want it letterboxed and uncut will want this disc.

7. **THE HOWLING** (New Line Cinema/Image Entertainment) remains the best werewolf film yet, and the colors finally register properly on this deluxe edition, letterboxed at 1.66. The disc features deleted footage, including more of Dave Allen's stop-motion, the shooting script, the theatrical trailer, Pino Donaggio's score isolated on analog

continued on page 62

### GOLDENEYE

An MGM/UA release from United Artists of an Albert R. Broccoli presentation. 10/95, 130 mins. Directed by Martin Campbell. Producers: Michael G. Wilson & Barbara Broccoli. Director of photography: Phil Meheux. Editor: Terry Rawlings. Music: Eric Serra. Art directors: Andrew Ackland-Snow, Charles Lee & Kathrin Brunner. Costume design: Lindy Hemming. Special effects supervisor: Chris Corbould. Story by Michael France.

James Bond.....Pierce Brosnan  
Alec Trevelyan.....Sean Bean  
Natalya Simonova.....Izabella Scorupco  
Xenia Onatopp.....Famke Janssen  
Jack Wade.....Joe Don Baker  
M.....Judi Dench

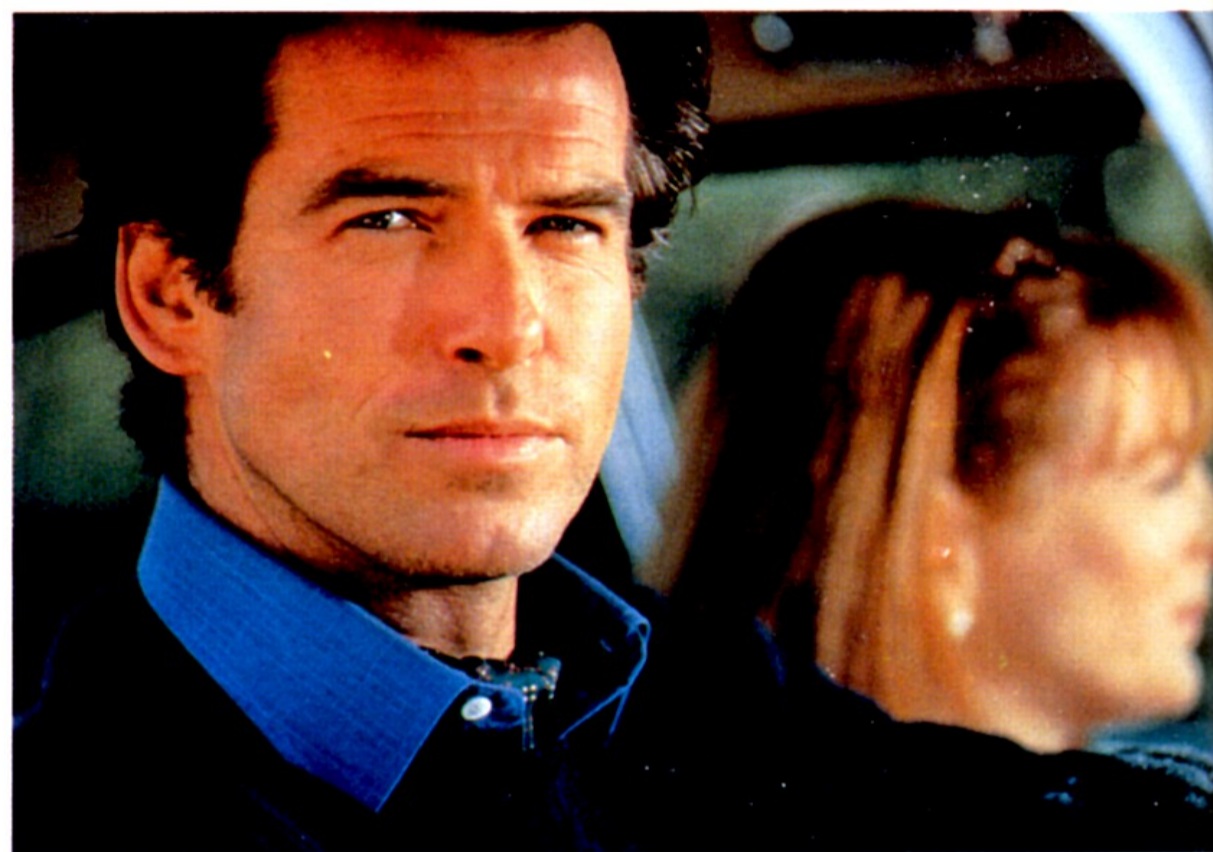
#### by Steven Jay Rubin

James Bond has returned! Thanks to MGM/UA's sparkling **GOLDENEYE**, the world's longest running film series is back on track and targeted for success well into the 21st century. Thanks to director Martin Campbell and cinematographer Phil Meheux, the film is a visual delight from the opening logo. And thanks to Pierce Brosnan's high-energy performance, this is the best James Bond movie in 12 years.

Packing his best action sequences into the lengthy teaser (always a showcase for memorable set pieces), Campbell introduces Brosnan's svelte Bond on a hazardous mission to destroy a Soviet chemical warfare installation. He's teamed with fellow agent Alec Trevelyan (Bean) who is captured and apparently murdered by Soviet General Ourumov (smarmy Gottfried John). Bond wipes out the installation and escapes on a motorcycle, chasing a plane over a cliff, jettisoning the cycle and skydiving his way into the cockpit. The titles begin, and the audience is already firmly on Bond's side.

After a mesmerizing computer-graphic title sequence created by Daniel Kleinman (Bond title veteran Maurice Binder died in 1991) and a forgettable title song by Tina Turner, the film rolls ahead nine years. The Soviet Union has disintegrated; the 00 section is somewhat of a dinosaur to the new female M (played by tight-lipped Dench); Moneypenny (now played by Samantha Bond) has the gall to mention sexual harassment issues; and Bond is, well, still Bond.

Top Russian renegade assassin Xenia Onatopp (Janssen), a woman who kills for pleasure, is working for a splinter group of the Russian Mafia called Janus, which includes renegade General Ourumov and, lo and behold, Alec Trevelyan, who didn't die after all. Their goal: theft of the GoldenEye,



Pierce Brosnan's performance in **GOLDENEYE** is a key element in reviving the Bond franchise; unfortunately, the film itself has more than its share of flaws.

a Russian satellite that can generate an electromagnetic pulse attack on Earth's electrical grid.

**GOLDENEYE**'s chief problem is the lack of a bigger-than-life villain and a bland scheme. The series should stay away from computer crime because it's difficult to generate an emotional response from the audience. Nobody cared about Max Zoran's plot to corner the market on computer chips in **A VIEW TO A KILL**, but at least he was going to sink Silicon Valley in the process. Because of this, the film ends weakly (after Onatopp is crushed to death): With the help of Russian computer techie Natalya Simonova (Scorupco), Bond tracks down the villains and does the requisite mano-a-mano with Trevelyan (who dies in an unbelievable fashion since the fall from the top of the satellite dish should have killed him instantly), and 007 and Simonova survive to greet Jack Wade, a Felix Leiter-type CIA buddy (Bond veteran Joe Don Baker) in a goofy conclusion.

Fortunately, **GOLDENEYE** isn't really about plot; it's about restoring Bond, and Brosnan comes through magnificently, molding the character for the '90s. He takes the role and invigorates it, boldly going where no Bond has gone since the days of Sean Connery. The film was a lot more serious than expected, considering how comfortable Brosnan is with light comedy. He actually has some terrific dramatic moments

with the new M and his former comrade, Trevelyan.

Debuting Bond director Martin Campbell handles himself well with a minimum of style but a thorough understanding of what makes an action sequence work. He's closer to John Glen than Terence Young. Remaining competitive with current action vehicles, screenwriters Bruce Feirstein and Jeffrey Caine, working from a story by Michael France (**CLIFFHANGER**) throw the kitchen sink at Bond in a series of high-explosive set pieces that are spectacular, if a bit repetitive. Campbell and the writers could have easily cut a couple action sequences and trimmed the running time by a half-hour. Bond movies should get back to the under two hours gait.

The film's biggest disappointment is Bond's new supercar—the BMW convertible that, although introduced in **Q** (Desmond Llewelyn's laboratory as a lethal weapon, becomes a non-issue when it is driven off by Wade. Another element which falls considerably short of expectations is the music by Eric Serra (**LA FEMME NIKITA**). Unmemorable and unromantic, it does not serve the film well. The series undoubtedly misses John Barry who was unavailable. Barry had the nifty ability to bring romance into even the most unromantic Bonds (witness **A VIEW TO A KILL**). They would do well to bring him back next time. □



## FILM RATINGS

- Catch it opening night
- Worth seeing first run
- Wait for second-run
- Wait for video/cable
- Fodder for MST-3K

### THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Marc Caro. Sony Pictures Classics. 11/95. With: Ron Perlman, Judith Vittet, Joseph Lucien, Daniel Emilfork.

This colorful attempt to manufacture an unreal world on film is successful in purely formal terms, not only providing beautifully photographed production design, but also choreographing some truly amazing sequences. (A stand-out is the trained flea who attaches a microscopic hypodermic to deliver poison at the behest of his owner, leaping from dog to victim and later hitching a ride across town, all presented at a flea's-eye-view.) However, despite the undeserved R-rating, this film is never really frightening, nor does its slim story achieve the fairy tale resonance of *THE WITCHES*. In other words, had this been an American production, the critics would be all over it with accusation of "all style, no substance." Thank God it's French!

●● Steve Biodrowski

### DRACULA: DEAD AND LOVING IT

Directed by Mel Brooks. Sony Pictures Entertainment. 12/95. 90 mins. With: Leslie Nielsen, Peter MacNicol, Steven Weber, Amy Yasbeck.

This movie is so precisely as bad as expected that it's almost not worth reviewing, except for one observation which should have been apparent to Mel Brooks: Leslie Nielsen was funny in *AIRPLANE* and *NAKED GUN* because he was doing a deadpan tongue-in-cheek self-parody of an image he had developed over many years and countless films. But he has no history in the horror genre to mock, so all that's left for him to do is a standard Lugosi imitation. Ho hum. ○ Jay Stevenson

### DESTINY TURNS ON THE RADIO

Directed by Jack Baran. Savoy Pictures & Rysler Entertainment. 4/95. 101 mins. With: James LeGross, Dylan McDermott, Quentin Tarantino, Nancy Travis, James Belushi.

This has nothing to do with radios and concerns only the destinies of some not very interesting characters. Julian (McDermott), a small-time hood who's just escaped from jail, is on his way to get his girl, Lucille (Travis), and his share of the last heist from partner. But, without food or water, passed out somewhere in the desert. Julian's fate seems decided, until destiny intervenes—Johnny Destiny, that is (in the form of Quentin Tarantino). Destiny, we learn much too late, is more than he appears to be: a mythical figure, a creator of fate, a believer in true love.

Back home, Julian discovers the money missing and Lucille in the arms of casino owner Tuerto (Belushi). Julian's mission: find the money and get the girl back before the cops get him. Julian is long on looks, but short on just about everything else, and you



Robin Williams reaches for help from Bonnie Hunt in one of the endless action set pieces from *JUMANJI*, a plotless special effects show.

start to wonder whether he can accomplish this mission and whether Lucille isn't better off with Tuerto. But, with the unsolicited help of the enigmatic Johnny Destiny, Julian gets the dough and the dame and, with the cops just seconds away, follows Destiny into the abyss from whence he came: the hotel's swimming pool.

● Sonja Burres

### JUMANJI

Directed by Joe Johnston. Sony Pictures Entertainment. 12/94. 104 mins. With: Robin Williams, Bonnie Hunt, Kirsten Dunst, Bradley Pierce.

A good concept for a *TWILIGHT ZONE* episode has been padded to interminable feature-length with endless, cartoony CG effects. As a boy, Alan Parrish (Adam Hann-Burd) is sucked into a magical board game with a jungle setting; when he emerges decades later, having survived this inhospitable environment has turned him into not a Tarzanesque Arnold Schwarzenegger, but a cowardly Robin Williams. The only way to put a stop to the chaos unleashed by *Jumanji* is to finish the game he started—hardly a difficult feat, as no skill is involved, simply dice rolling—but for some reason the characters can't figure this out for the first hour-and-a-half. Inevitably, some of the effects are exciting, and some of the actors' reactions to them generate a few chuckles, but this is mostly a charmless children's film.

● Jay Stevenson

### THE KINGDOM

Directed by Lars Von Trier. With: Ernst-Hugo Jaregard, Kirsten Rolffes, Soren Pilmark, Ghita Norby.

This is not really a movie but a mini-series strung together for feature presentation. "Lynchian" is the adjective that comes inevitably to mind: this soap opera, set in the hospital of the title, includes a mix of melodrama, mysticism, and black comedy reminiscent of *TWIN PEAKS*. The labyrinthine plot and subplots defy summary; suffice to say that that they do maintain audience

interest for the entire running time.

Occasionally, the TV origins betray themselves, especially with two dishwasher characters who never interact with the rest of the cast. They simply recount the goings-on, presumably to bring viewers up to date. This may have been useful when watching one-hour episodes on a weekly basis, but these scenes could have been dropped from the feature version.

The various comic threads lead to a hilarious conclusion: all the eccentric activities seem to be winding up just as a hospital inspection is taking place. Perhaps the strongest (and most serious) plotline involves the hypochondriac mother of an orderly, who keeps checking into the hospital in order to investigate the restless ghost of a little girl. The gradual unraveling of this mystery helps hold together some of the other frivolous activities on view, and the horrifying climax (involving the ghastly rebirth—a *la* *THE WITCHING HOUR*—of the girl's murderous father, played by Udo Kier) leaves the door open for a subsequent series. It's safe to say that anyone who's sat through this will be eager for the as-yet-unfilmed follow-up.

●● Steve Biodrowski

### POWDER

Directed & written by Victor Salva. Hollywood Pictures. 10/95. 111 mins. PG-13. With: Sean Patrick Flannery, Mary Steenburgen, Lance Henriksen, Jeff Goldblum.

This received some unfortunate press when it was revealed that writer-director Salva pleaded guilty to charges stemming from "molesting" a 12-year-old boy in the 1980s. An attempted boycott failed to prevent the film from making \$30 million, which in a way is a good thing: after all, it is ridiculous to suggest that a man who has served his time and paid his debt to society should be prevented from making an honest living. On the other hand,

having seen this film before the news broke, I can say that it was always apparent, even without knowledge of the director's past, that something was up. The most obvious example occurs when the title character (Flannery) watches a bare-chested teenage athlete rinsing off in slow-motion. The alleged content of the scene (an outsider's envy of someone who fits in) is so obviously upstaged by the underlying homo-eroticism as to be laughable. Had Salva simply come out of the closet, one might have admired his daring; instead, such gratuitous intrusions erupt at inappropriate moments, as if betraying a hidden personal agenda. Much of the narrative delivers a message that sounds (even if unintentionally) like the specious rationalizing of a child molester: parents abuse and abandon their children; strangers who lock them up against their will are doing it for their own good; and no matter how much one protests, one really wants to be loved and touched by adults in positions of authority.

To be fair, there *are* several powerful scenes and strong performances in this Tim Burton-type fantasy about a gifted young man whose strange appearance prevents him from fitting in with society; although the film is never as fanciful and endearing as *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*, it shows signs of talent, even if that talent does betray itself with some bad judgement.

● Steve Biodrowski

### RAGING ANGELS

Directed by Alan Smithee. Nu Image & Chako Films. 11/95. 97 mins. R. Written by Kevin Rock, David Markov, Chris Bittler. With: Sean Patrick Flannery, Diane Ladd, Michael Pare, Monet Mazur, Shelley Winters.

Here's your chance to see *POWDER*'s Sean Patrick Flannery with hair; otherwise, avoid this bottom-of-the-barrel drek which somehow never achieves the critical mass of lunacy that would turn it into great camp. The story concerns a would-be rock musician

With a penchant for inexplicable electrical phenomena, *Powder* (Sean Patrick Flannery) turns out to be more than just a weird-looking bald guy.





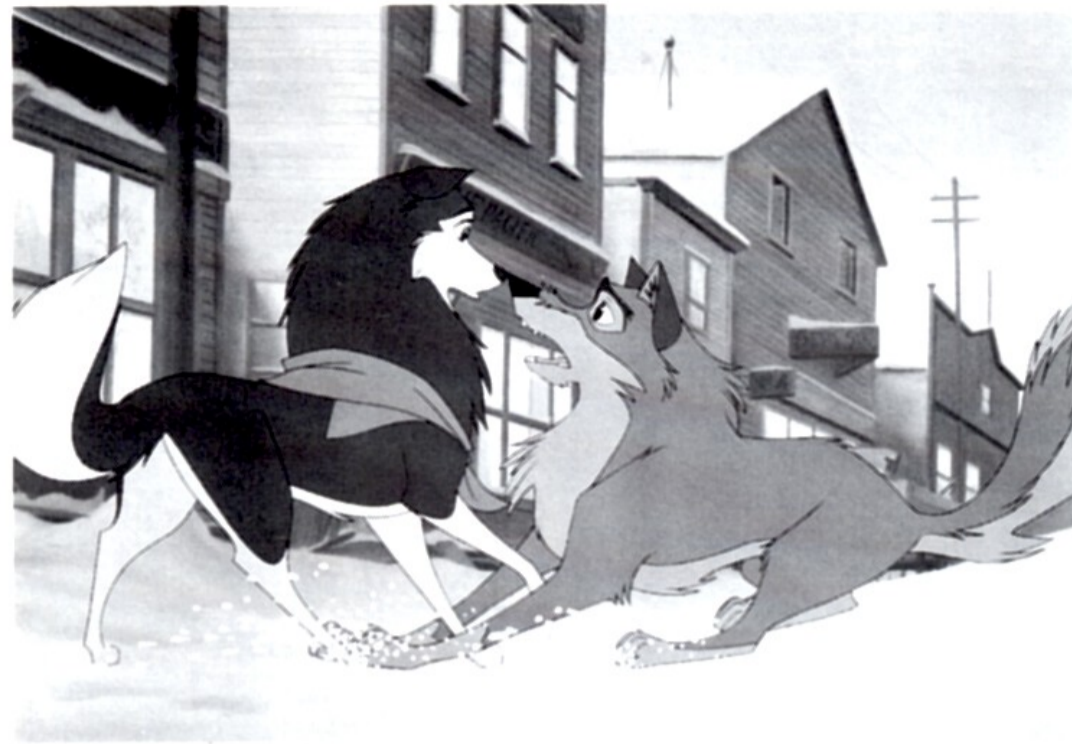
(Flannery) whose girlfriend (Mazur) gets a back-up singing gig with star Colin Gramercy (Pare), who happens to be part of the Coalition for World Unity, an apparently benign organization that is actually a front for Satanic forces! The right-wing fundamentalist paranoia of the concept is never put forth convincingly enough to be truly offensive; in fact, the whole plot is so incoherent it's hard to feel much of anything except exasperation. The characters are stupid, especially Mazur's, who never gets a clue about the evil around her, reducing her to a standard "girlfriend who must be rescued by the hero." Even more confusing is Gramercy, who (we are never sure) is either a dupe, a shill, a spokesman, or maybe a founding member of the organization. Features some pathetic borrowings from PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE (Satanism lurking behind rock music, a planned execution of the girlfriend during a televised concert), and a climactic battle between the demon Moloch and the Angel Gilead with visual effects that looks about half as good as your average video arcade game. The closest thing to a redeeming feature is Ladd's off-the-wall performance, which keeps us uncertain exactly how seriously she is taking the whole enterprise. **○ Steve Biodrowski**

## STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN (A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH)

Directed & written by Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger. Columbia Pictures & Rank Films, 4/95 (re-release), 104 mins. Technicolor and B&W. PG. With: David Niven, Kim Hunter, Roger Livesay, Raymond Massey.

In WWII, a British flier named Peter Carter (Niven) is forced to bail out of his burning plane without a parachute. He shares what he is certain will be his last conversation with June (Hunter), an American radio operator. Miraculously, Carter survives his freefall and encounters June. Unbelievably happy at their mutual good fortune, they are inseparable for the next 20 hours. However, a terrible mistake has been made. Carter was supposed to have died, but his heavenly guide

**WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**, with John Travolta and Harry Belafonte, portrays an alternate universe wherein the stereotypes of blacks and whites have been switched.



Obscured by the success of TOY STORY, Amblimation's BALTO is nevertheless an excellent adventure that stands on its own merits beside any Disney effort.

missed him in the miserable English fog. To rectify this error, Conductor 71 goes to Earth, expecting the rational English gentlemen to come along quietly when he learns what has happened. Carter, however, having fallen in love, is no longer willing to accept death. His request for an appeal is granted by the high court of heaven, and he begins the fight for his life.

The film is about all the liberties we say we have yet too infrequently choose to execute; about questioning authority; even if that authority is as high as heaven; about the power and importance of the common man; about the value of art in the world; and about the stupidity and ignorance of racism and prejudice and about 104 minutes of pure entertainment. Rarely does a film try to incorporate its politics so gracefully and suggest its questions so eloquently; rarer still does it succeed. **●●● Sonja Burres**

This art-house theatrical re-release was a slight disappointment, only in that the restored Technicolor print, albeit sharp and vibrant, still suffered from some spackling, especially around the reel changes. Also, it was interesting to note how the film had dated: the third-act heavenly trial mostly sidelines the romantic leads so that the film can deliver a message encouraging U.S.-British cooperation in the post-war world. This may have been relevant during the film's original release in 1946, but it today it's just a distraction from the wonderful love story at the core. Nevertheless, don't let this minor carping prevent you from enjoying this otherwise wonderful classic. **●●● Jay Stevenson**

## THREE WISHES

Directed by Martha Coolidge. Rysher Entertainment 9/95. 114 mins. With: Patrick Swayze, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Joseph Mazzello, Seth Mumy.

This sincere attempt at an uplifting family fantasy misfires through misplaced emphasis, de-emphasizing its supernatural element so much that it seems almost grafted on to an otherwise ordinary drama, rather than smoothly integrated. Swayze's drifter,

after being run over by Mastrantonio's single mother, is invited to recuperate with her and her two children. Needless to say, he ends up (even if inadvertently) providing a father figure for the two boys, whose real dad is missing in action. Along the way we discover that his traveling companion, a scraggly mutt, is really a genie in disguise, who grants each family member a wish. The initial revelation is excellently handled, as the youngest son's bedroom walls melt away to reveal a magical jungle in which the genie—appearing like a monster but revealing himself to be quite benign—exposes his true form. Later effects (the little boy's wish is to fly during a fireworks display) move away from a subjective hallucinatory approach, destroying the ambiguity of the initial appearance. The sequence seems merely inserted to provide a some gratuitous visual flash near the conclusion; all it accomplishes is unraveling whatever real magic has been woven through the character interaction. Still, as far as shameless heart-string-pullers go, this is better than several others we've seen this year. **●● Steve Biodrowski**

## WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

Directed by Desmond Nakano. Lawrence Bender/A Band Apart production. 9/95. 89 mins. With: John Travolta, Harry Belafonte, Kelly Lynch, Margaret Avery.

Conventional racial stereotypes are turned upside down in this alternate universe: blacks have the wealth and privilege, while poor whites struggle to get by. Of course, this inversion is a gross oversimplification: Hispanics, Orientals, Indians, and other ethnic groups might as well not exist as far as the film is concerned. Still, writer-director Desmond Nakano uses his schematic approach to eye-opening effect, presenting an interesting, satirical view of this role-reversal world (predominantly black TV shows, unprovoked black cops beating up white people, etc.). Amidst all this, Travolta and Belafonte struggle valiantly to turn their archetypal roles into convincing characters acting out a dramatic struggle, and, for the most part they succeed, even though the arch of their re-

lationship is predictable (they start off hating each, then—surprise—find out they have some things in common). If traditional "alternate" or fantasy scenarios (e.g., 1984) frighten us into wanting a return to our known reality, the best thing to be said about WHITE MAN'S BURDEN is that its mirror image (albeit distorted) is still a recognizable enough reflection so that no sensible viewer would wish for a return to the status quo. **●● Steve Biodrowski**

## ANIMATION

### BALTO

Directed by Simon Wells. A Universal release of an Amblin Entertainment presentation. 12/95. 77 mins. Voices: Kevin Bacon, Bob Hoskins, Bridget Fonda, Jim Cummings.

Inevitably, recent "non-Disney" animated features seem to suffer by comparison to the string of successes hit out of the park by the Mouse Factory. BALTO, produced by Steven Spielberg's Amblimation studio, is one of a growing number of exceptions: it is so impressive on its own merits that any thoughts of its predecessors at Disney are quickly forgotten. Simply said, BALTO is a beautifully crafted film.

The true story (of the title character—half-wolf, half-dog—who leads a sled team that delivers medicine to the diphtheria-stricken city of Nome, Alaska) works well in animation because it's unlike anything we've ever seen in the genre before. This is not a musical fairy tale; it's an adventure, with action scenes as exciting as anything you're bound to see in live action. It's also the quintessential "hero's journey." After shunning his wolf lineage, the main character goes on a quest for self-discovery throughout the course of the film, allowing the story to resonate with a deep-rooted theme of learning to accept oneself.

Helping Balto on his journey are three sidekicks: Boris the snow goose (Bob Hoskins) and polar bears Muk and Luk (both voiced by Phil Collins), all of whom are marvels of character design—fashioned not in the realistic style of Balto, but in a more cartoony manner. The all-star parade of voices also includes Kevin Bacon as Balto and Bridget Fonda as his love interest, Jenna. Stealing the show, however, is veteran voice actor Jim Cummings as the film's villain, Steele. His snake-oil performance as the narcissistic bully goes perfectly with the sleek look that the animators have given the character.

Added to all of this is stunningly realistic animation of the Alaskan wilderness and its dangerous elements. This sense of reality only heightens the film's action sequences, (a grizzly bear attack, an avalanche and an escape from a collapsing cave are just some of the exciting moments). Director Simon Wells has also employed a certain look that's never quite been seen before, neither too realistic nor too cartoony. It has a style all its own.

With POCAHONTAS, ARABIAN KNIGHT, and TOY STORY, 1995 was an exciting year for animation, and BALTO was the perfect way to cap it off. **●●●1/2 Michael Lyons**



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continued from page 5

tenced to the gallows, she got a pardon through the efforts of three American presidents."

He continued, "Then a couple of years ago they found these diaries in the house where she and James lived in Liverpool purporting to express the thoughts of Jack the Ripper. Whether they are authentic or not, I don't know. But I do know that the Florence Maybrick story is entirely true. We don't know why she did it, or if she did it, but she was convicted of having poisoned her husband and that's the story I'm staying close to." But Friedkin added, "Sure, it's going to be horrific. I see it as a warped love story tangential to the actual Ripper murders. It's twisted love that resulted in slaughter. It's a tremendous drama and the scariest material I've ever put my hands on. Here's this woman living in the same house with her two young children and married to a man who may be Jack the Ripper. He comes home to her and the kids! That seems to be a situation fraught with peril and horror."

Although early announcements suggested Anthony Hopkins would star as Maybrick for

an estimated \$3.5 million fee, and that his new company Margam Productions would co-produce the \$25 million picture, Friedkin revealed, "Hopkins is waiting to read the completed script before he commits." One thing is for certain, though, MRS. MAYBRICK will not be filmed on the actual locations in London's East End. Friedkin remarked, "The area has changed completely and you'd have to build too many sets in London. I anticipate shooting somewhere in Europe instead." □

## JAMES & GIANT PEACH

continued from page 7

blind, is something of a coward. Jane Leves (FRAZIER) is the Ladybug, played as a kindly, maternal woman who always keeps her handbag at her side. Miriam Margolyes voices the glowworm, whose tail provides a light source inside the peach. Richard Dreyfuss is the Centipede, a rude and brash New Yorker, who stands out among the more refined British types. The book's seventh insect, a Silkworm was dropped, and "somebody stepped on him," joked Rosen. "The Silkworm was very close to the Glowworm, and even Glowworm has a very small role.

There were just too many characters to put on the screen, and the only reason to have the Silkworm was to make the thread they attach to the Seagulls, which saves them from the shark. What we did instead was have the Spider make the thread."

Having a fully functioning stop-motion studio already in place meant that the making of JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH was a somewhat easier task for the filmmakers. "On NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, there was a big learning curve," said Rosen. "That benefited us greatly when we came to do this film, because now people have been doing it for five years, and the level of animation is much stronger. What they learned on NIGHTMARE allowed us to go beyond that, so now we have some very sophisticated armatures and puppets. Two of the characters, James and the Centipede, have fully animatronic faces, so you can push them around and make them very expressive."

The other advance over NIGHTMARE is being able to use computer technology to a much greater degree. "We have roughly 560 animation shots in the movie," states Rosen. "Over half of them have been touched by the comput-

er in one way or another. It can be as simple as rod removal or as extensive as using CGI to create the ocean. Sony Pictures Imageworks is doing all this wonderfully stylized water for us."

One thing that didn't get easier, was assembling a top-notch crew of animators. Of the 15 who worked on NIGHTMARE, about half have returned for JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH. Most notable among the missing is NIGHTMARE's animation supervisor, Eric Leighton. "We went looking all over for animators, and in England we found that Tim Burton had grabbed a lot for MARS ATTACKS, so we have mostly Americans," said Rosen.

Burton, as executive producer of JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH and director of MARS ATTACKS, seems to be in competition against himself for animators. "We had to keep reminding Tim of 'conflict of interest,'" laughed Rosen. "Actually, we'll be finishing up when Tim is just starting his puppet animation, and I think Henry will tell any of the animators who want to go work on MARS ATTACKS, they can, because there will be a period here where it's not going to be very busy." □



# LETTERS

## BLACK SUNDAY REMAKE, ANYONE?

I have just read Nikolai Gogol's long tale *Vij* (*Viy* is the Spanish edition) upon which Mario Bava's classic *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO* was based. Released in Panama by American International Pictures in 1961 as *BLACK SUNDAY* [27:6:54], it was one of my horror favorites of all times, an unforgettable cinematic experience from my childhood. Though it lags in the romantic scenes, the overall effect is remarkable. This film has been placed among the classics of fantastic cinema, for all the right reasons: excellent B&W cinematography, the hypnotic presence of Barbara Steele, the handsomeness of John Richardson, the eerie gothic atmosphere...

Now what has really surprised me is how good Gogol's story is. It is even better than the one told in *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO*, which has little resemblance to the original. All the literary descriptions of monastic life, the marketplace, the ride of the witch on the philosopher's back through meadows and hills, the customs of the cossacks, the siege of the church where the philosopher prays for the soul of the landowner's daughter, and the final appearance of *Vij*, are the material of which great horror films are made. No wonder Bava was successful in translating Gogol's words. In these days when the few horror films made are so tasteless and slimy-green, it would be wonderful to make a new version of *Vij*. Now that American-Russian relations have improved, it could even be a co-production which could transmit all the beauty of the Russian landscape, its icons and traditions.

Edgar Soberon-Torchia  
Panama, Panama

## STAR TREK HEALTH CARE

Regarding Dale Kutzera's critique of *DEEP SPACE NINE*'s episode "Life Support" [27:4/5:103]: in order to dilate Vedek Bareil's blood vessels, Dr. Bashir prescribes an "experimental drug" which has massive organ damage as a side effect. I looked through a couple of prescription drug references and counted some eight to ten vasodilators, most of which have harmless side effects. One would figure that both the Federation and the Bajoran medical fields would also supply such drugs, but instead he is

given a life-threatening drug. To me this not only negates the "message" of knowing when to let a person die, but it represents a serious drop in the show's credibility.

The production staff claims that the romance of Kira and Bareil wasn't deepening her character. If fans weren't "losing sleep" over the relationship, it was because we were confident that the writers would deepen it with the passage of television seasons. I'm not sure that the *STAR TREK* staff can give viewers a "message" about when to let a person die if they don't know when to let a creative idea live.

Amy Nolting  
Cartersville GA

## 007 FOR THE '90s

I just ate up the coverage of *GOLDENEYE*. I've seen it since; it's *spectacular!* It appears to be everyone's dream Bond film: tons of action, loads of genuine danger, gorgeous women, fast cars, nasty villains, and a slew of sexual double-entendres. And Pierce Brosnan really brings a great cross between Connery's toughness and Moore's slickness. In fact, while the one word I used to describe Timothy Dalton's Bond generally was "tough," for Brosnan the word that comes to mind is "smooth."

However, I wonder if your magazine has a bug up its ass when it comes to Timothy Dalton (or for that matter, George Lazenby). It's so typical of Americans, really, considering the illiteracy rate in this country. Dalton was the most accurate when it came to bringing Ian Fleming's fictional character to life. But as happens too often, *film* audiences, specifically *American* film audiences, tend to like something else. I won't argue that Connery (with the help of Terrence Young and Richard Maibaum) "created" the characters *as* film audiences came to like him.

I guess I'm trying to say there's no need to build up one actor at the expense of someone else. Had Dalton been able to continue back in '91 (when the series was ground to a halt by a totally unrelated legal entanglement), audiences might have gotten the chance to see him "grow" into the part. Don't forget that both Connery's and Moore's "favorite" film with audiences were, respectively, their *third*—*GOLDFINGER* and *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*. Who can say what Dalton's third film might

have been like?

Henry R. Kujawa  
Camden, NJ 08104

[*You're right about Timothy Dalton's Bond. He certainly deserved another chance in 1991, and he probably could have won audiences over; in fact, watch the more dramatic moments in GOLDENEYE, and it's easy to imagine him playing the scenes. However, our assessment of Pierce Brosnan's potential ("Can Brosnan Do it Better") was based on whether or not he could rejuvenate a series which had lain dormant for six years after performing poorly in its last outing. The studio needed to present Bond as new and updated for the '90s, and recasting was an effective way of accomplishing that.*]

## CORRECTION:

In the *STAR TREK* double issue [27:4/5] Ira Steven Behr was listed alternatively as co-executive producer and executive producer of *DEEP SPACE NINE*. Behr was made sole executive producer of the series part-way through the show's third season.

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## LASERBLAST

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track 2, plus running by Joe Dante, Dee Wallace Stone, the late Christopher Stone, and Robert Picardo. It also has the special effects sequences in CAV on sides 2 and 3.

8. **THE SINBAD COLLECTION** (Columbia/Tri-Star) presents *THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD*, *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD*, and *SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER* in what look like newly struck prints. (Previous releases of *SEVENTH VOYAGE* appeared faded). All are rich examples of Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion artistry, though the first two are far superior. *GOLDEN VOYAGE* features some of Harryhausen's best work, a great Miklós Rózsa score, and a terrific performance by Tom Baker as the villain. The last portion of *EYE OF THE TIGER* is presented in CAV for single-frame analysis. Trailers, footage of Harryhausen accepting an honorary Oscar, production drawings, and portions of a 7TH VOYAGE documentary are also included.

9. **THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND** (Columbia/Tri-Star), one of Harryhausen's most exciting efforts, now features better color and chapter encoding not available on the previous RCA/Columbia release. This sequel to *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* is a rousing adventure that outdoes the Jules Verne novel—from the heroes' balloon escape to their encounters with giant stop-motion creatures on the titular island.

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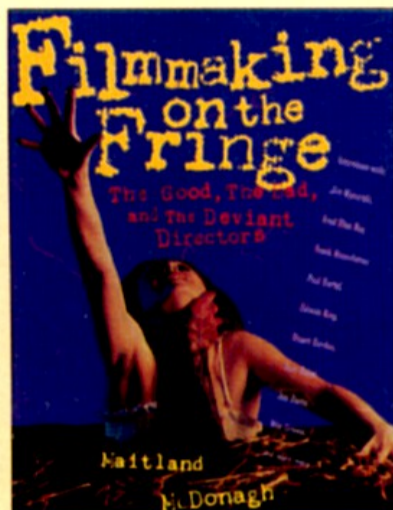


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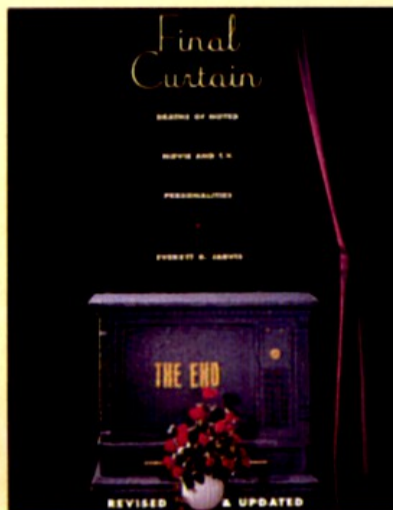
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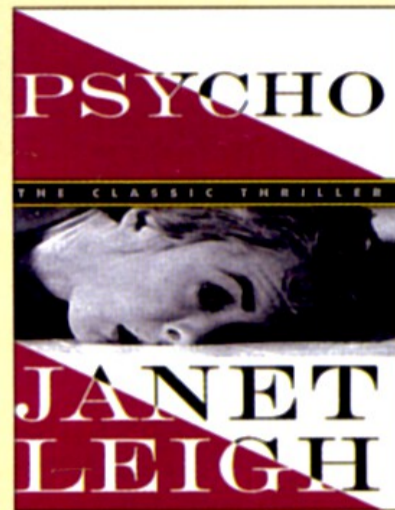
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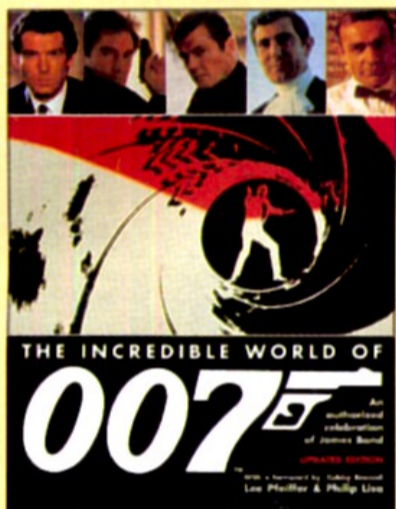
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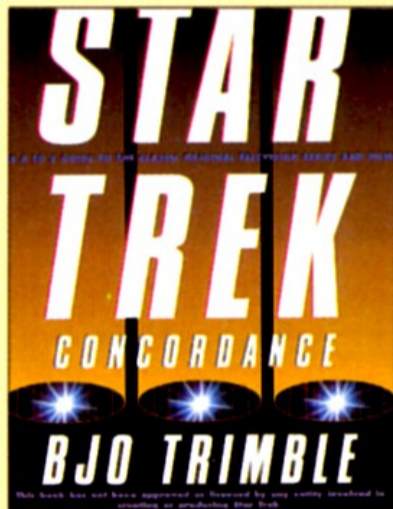
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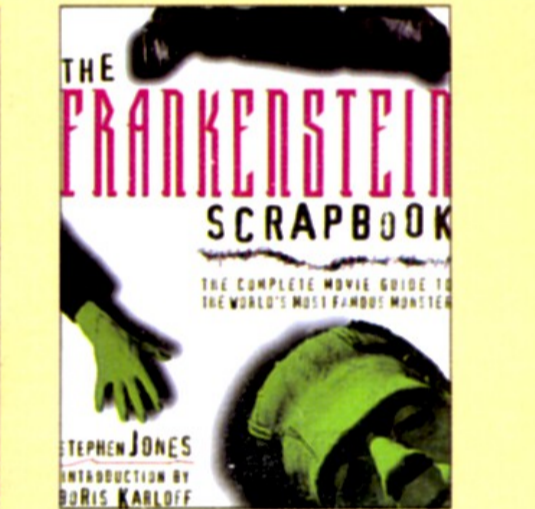
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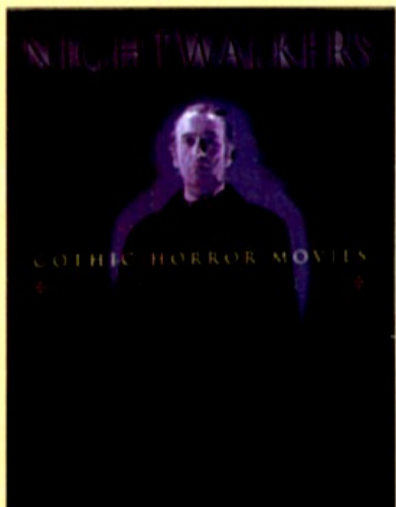
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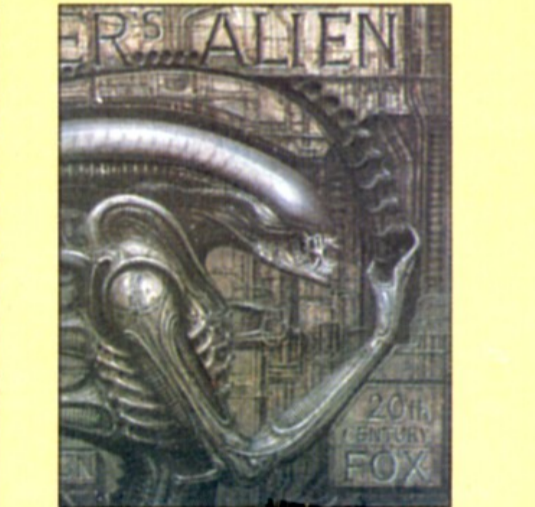
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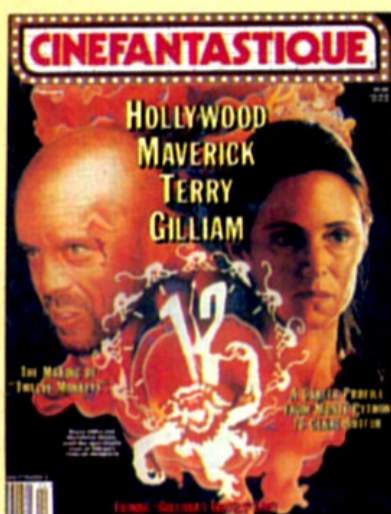


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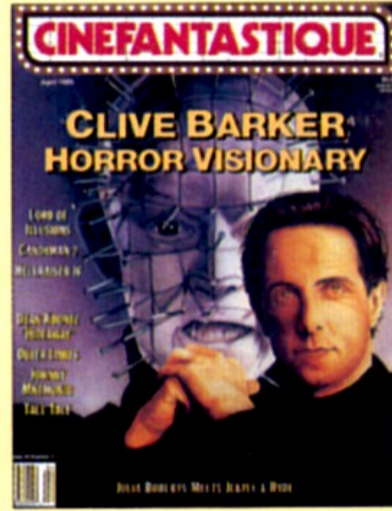
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